

Gaza exports first farm produce direct

GAZA CITY (AFP) — Gaza farmers were to sell produce directly to foreign clients for the first time on Sunday, Palestinian officials told AFP, hailing the deal as a breakthrough. The Gaza Farmer's Association and the Palestinian Authority's Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation have worked out the deal with a British firm they identified as International Fruit Importers. Association member Zaher Tamash said that previously Gaza farmers had to sell their produce to Israeli intermediaries who then sold it abroad. "We have agreed with the authority to export five tonnes of strawberries from Sunday to the British company," Mr. Tamash said. "If this test succeeds it will be a breakthrough for Gaza and will be the start of regular exports," he added. Under the deal, an Israeli sub-contractor still transports the fruit from the Erez crossing point between Gaza and the Jewish state to Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion airport from where it will be flown to London. "We are getting \$2 a kilo for packaged strawberries," said Mr. Tamash, "whereas from the Israelis we used to get \$1.5 a kilo without packaging." The boxes are stamped "Gaza strawberries, Beit Lahia, Produce of Gaza, Gaza Strip."

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Gore begins Mideast visit in Egypt

CAIRO (AP) — Vice President Al Gore arrived Sunday in Egypt for a three-day visit, touting the private sector as the key to stronger U.S.-Egyptian ties and prosperity in the region. Mr. Gore will meet President Hosni Mubarak, Prime Minister Ataf Sedki and businessmen on Monday. He travels to the resort city of Luxor before departing for Jordan on Tuesday. The vice president is here to discuss a joint Egyptian-American programme to encourage development of Egypt's private sector, still emerging from decades of state control. "The private sector must be the engine if our partnership is to flourish," Mr. Gore said after arriving at Cairo International airport, where he was greeted by Dr. Sedki and U.S. Ambassador Edward Walker. Mr. Mubarak and Mr. Gore are expected to sign agreements setting up a partnership for economic growth and development between Egypt and the United States, which provides Egypt with \$2.1 billion in aid annually.

King condoles tribes over Hammad

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein on Sunday delegated secretary general of the Royal Court Munir Al Durra to condole Al Tarrabin and Hammad tribes over the death of former Minister of Culture and Senator Jumma'a Hammad.

Ensur assails U.S. Senate move on Jerusalem

AMMAN (Petra) — Chairman of the Lower House of Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee Abdullah Ensour on Sunday described a campaign launched in the American Senate to move the U.S. embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to occupied Jerusalem as irresponsible. Dr. Ensour said the signing of a petition presented by Senator Alfonse D'Amato by 93 senators of the 100-member Senate had serious implications, noting that the Senate does not have the right to recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. He said this violates U.N. Security Council resolutions and endangers the Middle East peace process.

Kuwait reopens case of Jordanian

KUWAIT (AP) — The state Sunday reopened a court case against a Jordanian who was convicted in absentia of "collaborating" with Iraq, fined around \$3.5 million and given a 10-year prison sentence. Imad Eddin Abdul Azim Khalaf, 58, was convicted in December of having exported "foodstuffs to the enemy during the time of war," Mr. Khalaf, who is believed to be in Jordan, asked that his case be heard again so that he could prove his innocence, according to the Kuwaiti News Agency. This was the first reported reopening of a case since "collaboration" trials started shortly after the 1991 liberation of the emirate from a seven-month Iraqi occupation. KUNA said Mr. Khalaf informed the court through his lawyer that he could not come to Kuwait because of ill health. Judge Salah Al Fahad set May 20 to start looking into the case and insisted that Mr. Khalaf appear in court.

Israel says no to Lebanon flights

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel will not open its airspace to Jordanian flights to and from Lebanon, which is technically still at war with the Jewish state, a defence ministry spokesman said Sunday. "We reached a peace agreement with Jordan not Lebanon," said spokesman Oded Ben Ami. "We oppose flights over our territory by Jordanian aircraft from Lebanon for the same reason as Syria refuses our aircraft," he added. Royal Jordanian airlines this month began flying through Israeli airspace en route to Europe following the Oct. 26 peace treaty, and has requested an air corridor to Lebanon. The Haaretz newspaper reported that the authorities fear Lebanese extremists could blow themselves up on flights over Israel. Israeli aircraft fly scheduled routes only to Cairo in the Arab World.

Israelis threaten to boycott Jordan

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli ravel agents threatened Sunday to boycott Jordan if it refuses to lift a quota on the numbers of Israelis allowed to the Kingdom. An association of travel agencies set a two-week deadline for the quota to be lifted. It said it was acting because hundreds of Israeli tourists were refused entry to Jordan last week because the numbers exceeded under the Israel-Jordan peace deal had already been met. Jordan allows only 600 Israeli tourists a day into the Kingdom and demands that they travel in groups, a travel agent said. The number of visitors is less than the agreed quota, but numbers were higher last week because of school holidays.

Kohl to visit Jordan in June to create closer German role in peace

Rau ends visit after reaffirming Bonn's strong support for Jordan

By Cathy King Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Germany is committed to supporting the Middle East peace process and to supporting Jordan, but more German involvement on a bilateral level with the Kingdom cannot be addressed until German Chancellor Helmut Kohl visits here in June, a senior German official said Sunday.

Winding up a two-day visit, Prime Minister of the German State of North Rhine-Westphalia Johannes Rau told a press conference that Germany would support the peace process through "personal and economic contact," adding that Germany aims at "bringing Jordan and Israel closer to the European Union (EU)."

Mr. Rau declined from openly evaluating the present state of the peace process saying evaluation should be left up to those parties involved.

He expressed hope, however, that his visit, accompanied by a large economic and trade delegation, would open doors of economic cooperation between countries involved in the peace process.

Mr. Rau said that he will promote German and particularly his state's participation in the Amman economic summit scheduled to take place in October. He added that he had met with many German businessmen, including representatives of the textile industry and water desalination plants, who had expressed a desire to attend the conference.

The Amman forum is intended to be a follow-up meeting to the one held in Casablanca in October. The Casablanca summit was attended by heads of states, including His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, heads and representatives of governments and international corporations.

Mr. Rau attributed the cause of Jordan's economic stagnation and the "deterioration in the economy" to the oil and trade embargo enforced on Iraq since 1990. But, he said, Germany was committed to U.N. Security Council resolutions and until such time that Iraq has complied with all of them, the sanctions would remain in place.

Mr. Rau said that there were positive signs that the Jordanian economy would

improve because of peace and security in the region. Mr. Rau would not comment specifically on Jordan's debt to Germany. He said that this matter was under discussion and would be dealt with during the visit of Chancellor Kohl.

Bonn has offered \$50 million in debt relief to Jordan. Jordan's outstanding debt to the Federal Republic stood at about \$475 million at the end of 1994, according to the Ministry of Finance statistics.

Mr. Rau, who left for Syria late Sunday, was accompanied by a 35-member delegation including officials and businessmen. During their stay Mr. Rau had an audience with His Majesty King Hussein and met with Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker, Speaker of the Upper House of Parliament Ahmad Lawzi, Lower House Speaker Saad Hayel Sour and Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti among others.

Mr. Rau told journalists that although Syria had not taken the same initiative as Jordan on the peace process, he hoped that following his meeting with Syrian Presi-

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Egypt, Israel dig in heels in NPT row

CAIRO (Agencies) — Israel and Egypt dug in their heels in a row over the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as both sides refused to give an inch in talks here Sunday.

Israeli deputies repeated to President Hosni Mubarak that Israel would not join the 170-nation pact until there was a comprehensive Middle East peace deal.

"One day there will be peace in the region and then we will sign," the delegation leader, Labour Deputy Ori Orr, head of the Knesset's powerful defence and foreign affairs committee, told journalists after a two-hour meeting with Mr. Mubarak.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa said after separate talks with the Israeli delegation that Egypt "will not retreat from its rights in the matter of the Non-Proliferation Treaty unless Israel makes a step forward."

The six-strong parliamentary delegation from both the ruling Labour Party and the right-wing Likud went to Cairo on Sunday as guests of their Egyptian counterparts, saying they hoped to improve relations between the two countries.

But even before they met Mr. Mubarak, Egyptian Information Minister Safwat Al Sharif said "Egypt will not bend to pressure concerning the NPT."

Egypt, which signed peace with Israel in 1979, has refused to approve an indefinite extension of the NPT, to be discussed at the United Nations in April, unless Israel commits to joining the treaty.

Israel, citing reasons of security, has said it will not sign before concluding peace treaties with all the countries of the region. Mr. Musa said: "Israel must make a move if the Arabs are to do the same. Motion brings on motion. If Egypt is being asked to remain in the framework of the NPT then there must be some real Israeli progress... and a commitment to moving towards making the Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction," he added.

Detained Americans questioned in Iraq

BAGHDAD (Agencies) — Iraqi lawyers on Sunday were questioning two Americans who strayed into Iraq and could be jailed for up to 20 years for illegal entry if convicted, Iraqi sources said.

But if past cases are anything to go by, they could be simply expelled, or sentenced to much shorter terms and released before they had served their full periods.

Iraqi police arrested two Americans on Monday when they got lost trying to visit friends in the demilitarised border zone.

The case has again raised tension between Iraq and its Gulf war foe the United States, although American officials have been careful not to provoke Baghdad with public statements.

Sources in the Iraqi capital said Iraqi lawyers were now questioning the two, whose names have not been released. They said under Iraqi law, anyone entering Iraq without a visa can be sentenced to between one and 20 years.

In some cases in the past, Iraq expelled offenders or gave them suspended sentences.

But Iraq appeared to change tack in 1992 when its courts sentenced three Swedes, three Britons, a German, an American and Frenchman to terms of up to 10 years in prison.

In fact, all of them were released after serving less than a year. But their freedom came after pleas to President Saddam Hussein for clemency from senior Western officials, something which might stick in the gut of Washington's decision-makers.

On Saturday, Iraqi Vice President Taha Yassin Ramadan told the Associated Press in Baghdad that "nothing much will happen" to the two Americans.

However, he hinted that their release could be linked to demands for a lifting of the trade sanctions against the country imposed after its 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

The United States has blocked efforts by other Security Council members, Russia and France, to ease or

lift the embargo which Iraq claims is starving its 20 million people.

In Washington, a Clinton administration official said the United States is in contact with the Iraqi government through Polish diplomats, who administer a U.S. interests section in the Iraqi capital. The United States broke off diplomatic ties with Iraq in the 1991 Gulf war.

The Arab Times identified the Americans as Bill Barloon and David Daliberti, working for American firms in Kuwait.

It said Mr. Barloon's family was in Kuwait and Mr. Daliberti's wife was in the United States on vacation.

"Barloon's wife and three children were instructed by U.S. embassy officials not to answer press queries for the time being," the paper said, quoting an unnamed friend of the family.

Linda Barloon and her children were reported to be in a state of shock," the paper said.

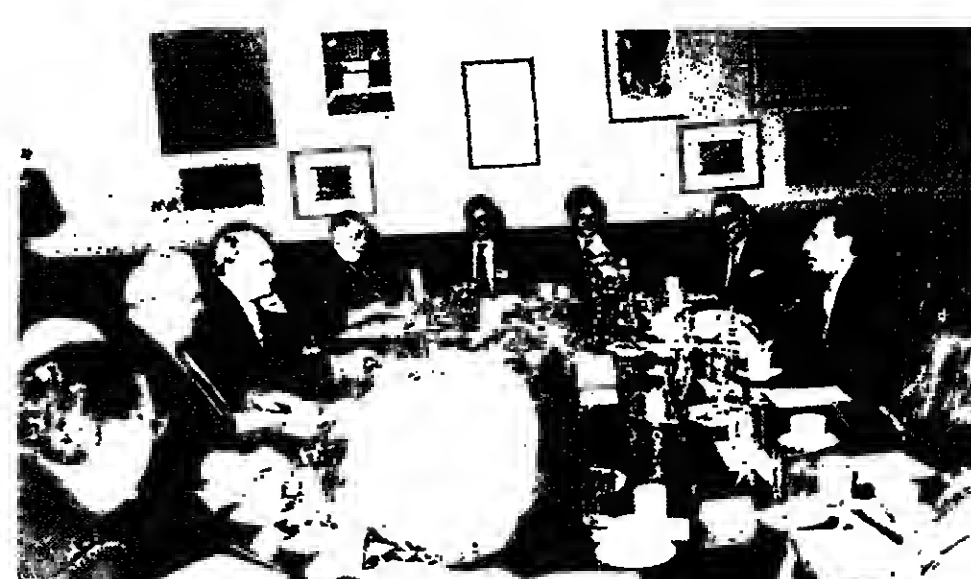
U.S. Defence Secretary William Perry, on a tour of the Gulf region, said the two were in no danger and that he hoped the matter would be resolved by Sunday. He said the men were employed by McDonnell Douglas Corp.

Representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Iraq were trying to determine the Americans' whereabouts.

Two other Americans have strayed across the border from Kuwait since the Gulf war.

In October 1992, Iraqi police arrested Chad Hall on the border but soon released him when witnesses from the United Nations Observer Mission testified he had not yet crossed the border when arrested by the Iraqis.

But another American, Ollman Kenneth Beatty, was given an eight-year sentence five days after his arrest in May, 1993. Mr. Beatty was freed in November the same year.



Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker and Rhine-Westphalia, chair of the Jordanian-German talks on Sunday (Petra photo)

2 Israelis killed and several wounded in attack near Hebron

HEBRON, occupied West Bank (Agencies) — Assassins believed to be Palestinians ambushed an Israeli bus in the West Bank city of Hebron on Sunday, killing two Israelis and wounding several, Israeli Television said.

The guerrillas fired on the bus on its way from Jerusalem to the settlement of Kiryat Arba near Hebron, scene of a mosque massacre of more than 30 Palestinians by a Jewish settler in February 1994.

A spokesman for settlers in the area said at least six people were wounded, one "very critically," Israeli Television, quoting police sources, said two people were killed.

Five wounded were being airlifted from Hebron's "Glass Junction," where the attack took place in the occupied West Bank.

Witnesses said that after the shooting, settlers rampaged through several Palestinian shops in Hebron before soldiers intervened and a military curfew was imposed.

A Palestinian was also wounded after the attack when angry Israeli settlers opened fire in reprisals damaging Palestinian cars in the nearby Halhul district, Palestinian witnesses said.

The Israeli army immediately sealed the area and began a manhunt for the bus attackers aided by flares.

A curfew was also slapped on Halhul and a neighbouring village, Palestinians said, adding that roadblocks had been put up on the road to Jerusalem.

Hebron has been the scene of bloody attacks between Palestinians and settlers for several years.

The worst was in February 1994 when settler Baruch Goldstein, who lived in Kiryat Arba, killed more than 30 Muslims at prayer in the Hebron mosque.

Soldiers fanned out in the Hebron area in search of the bus assailants, and rounded up a couple of dozen Palestinians near the attack site for questioning, Palestinian sources said.

The shooting occurred shortly before 8 p.m. (1800 GMT) about 80 metres from an army roadblock at the "Glass Junction," an entry point into Hebron.

Both sides of the bus were riddled with bullets. There was no immediate claim for Sunday's attack, but the army said it was believed Palestinians were responsible considering that settlers were targeted and the site is where attacks by militants are frequent.

Bomb kills 2 The bodies of two Palestinians killed while making a bomb were found Sunday near Jenin in the north of the occupied West Bank, Israeli police said.

Initial inquiries showed the two men were members of the Islamic Resistance Movement Hamas, but their identities were not given.

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Rabin renews opposition to Palestinian independence

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin spelled out Sunday his opposition to a Palestinian state after a minister said it would be created in several months.

"Mr. Rabin limited himself to pointing out that my position is not the government's position," Environment Minister Yossi Sarid told reporters after the weekly cabinet meeting.

But Mr. Sarid went on to say: "The creation of a Palestinian state is inevitable. From time to time it is good to recall certain realities and push forward the negotiations."

Mr. Sarid and his left-wing Meretz Party have long supported the idea of an independent Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza Strip alongside Israel.

"In several months, after the elections in the (Palestinian) territories, a Palestinian state will be created," he said Saturday.

"It will effectively be a state without being officially named as such," Mr. Sarid said, adding that it would carry out all government functions except "external security."

Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) have set a July 1 target date for an agreement on an Israeli army redeployment on the West Bank and long-delayed elections to a self-rule council.

"After a chairman is elected for the Palestinian Authority, and after a Palestinian council is elected, and after the council is given its executive and legislative authorities, if you see the whole picture I think it shows a Palestinian state is emerging, at least a state in the making," he said.

PLO agrees to continue talks; Abbas rejects partial pullout

TUNIS (Agencies) — The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) agreed to press on with autonomy talks with Israel after four days of stormy debate here marked by bitter accusations over delays in implementing Palestinian self-rule.

"There is no alternative" to pursuing talks with Israel, said PLO Executive Committee member Yasser Arafat Sunday after a two-day meeting of the top leadership body chaired by Yasser Arafat.

The PLO chairman's mainstream Fatah faction also wound up a debate which opened here Wednesday.

The Executive Committee gave a green assessment of the autonomy talks, accusing Israel of undermining them, and called on the United States, Russia, the European Union, Norway and Egypt to come to the rescue.

The committee urged them to bring the talks "in line with the declaration of principles."

Israel was to have redeployed its army away from Palestinian towns on the West Bank by July 13 last year ahead of elections to a new Palestinian self-rule council, under the terms of the September 1993 declaration of principles.

But Israel balked at the redeployment, saying it feared for the safety of the 130,000 Jewish settlers on the West Bank, and demanded first that Mr. Arafat crack down on militants opposed to the peace process.

PLO leaders also blasted Israel for not releasing thousands of Palestinian prisoners, for expanding Jewish settlements and sealing off the Palestinian territories to prevent militant attacks.

Farouq Kaddoumi, head of the PLO's Political Department, said the autonomy talks should be called off to allow the PLO to strengthen its position and garner more Arab and international support.

But Mr. Arafat's supporters retorted that breaking off the talks would mean listing self-rule for the Gaza Strip and Jericho enclave on the West Bank, where it was launched in May 1994. They said there were no guarantees that a diplomatic offensive would be successful.

Mr. Arafat stressed that it would be difficult for the PLO to call off the talks as U.S. Vice-President Al Gore was to meet Mr. Arafat this week.

Executive Committee Member Suleiman Al Najjiah told AFP the PLO had opted for a pessimistic tone in its final statement to stress that

UAE prince holds talks with Princes Abdullah and Faisal

ABU DHABI (Petra) — Sheikh Khalifeh Ben Zayed Al Nahayan, deputy commander in chief of the armed forces of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and a son of UAE President Sheikh Zayed Ben Sultan Al Nahayan, on Sunday received Their Royal Highnesses Prince Abdullah and Prince Faisal and a Jordanian military delegation, the Jordan News Agency, Petra reported.

Prince Abdullah, Prince Faisal and the delegation are in Abu Dhabi to attend the International Defence Exhibition '95 (INDEX '95), which opened Sunday (see inside).

Prince Abdullah, who commands Jordan's elite Special Forces, arrived in Abu Dhabi on Saturday, and Prince Faisal joined him there early Sunday.

Petra said Sheikh Khalifeh discussed with Prince Abdullah and Prince Faisal relations between Jordan and the UAE and means to enhance them.

Prince Abdullah also held talks with the Indonesian minister of state for scientific research who is heading his country's delegation to INDEX '95, which is attended by more than 600 manufacturers of arms and defence equipment from all over the world.

Prince Abdullah's talks with the Indonesian minister dealt with means of enhancing Jordanian-Indonesian relations, Petra said.

Prince Abdullah also held talks with the South African delegation to the exhibition in a meeting attended by Prince Faisal, the news agency reported.

U.S. groups urge rechanneling of Israel, Egypt aid into region

By P.V. Vivekanand Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Amid clear moves in Washington towards slashing foreign aid as a matter of policy, several American non-governmental organisations and church groups have come up with an unprecedented approach that advocates the distribution of the available assistance in a regional context rather than limiting it to Israel and Egypt.

In essence, the proposal, entitled "Toward A Safer Future for the Children of Abraham: A Proposal for Restructuring U.S. Aid to the Middle East," takes into consideration that the \$5.1 billion annual American aid to Israel (\$3 billion) and Egypt (\$2.1 billion) since they signed the Camp David

accords in 1978 would remain to be the amount of U.S. assistance available to the Middle East.

As such, the authors of the proposal are calling for a redistribution of the amount to serve the basic American objective of maintaining peace in the region and contributing to the development of Middle Eastern countries.

Peter Gubser, head of the American Near East Refugee Agency (ANERA) — one of the authors of the proposal — concedes that it is an uphill task to convince the U.S. Congress, the administration and the various lobbying groups in Washington to change their traditional thinking.

"It is difficult, but not impossible," Mr. Gubser told the Jordan Times in a recent interview after making a copy

of the proposal available to the paper. "True, it would take years, but we have to start somewhere."

"There are some Israeli groups which don't like but there are some which do like it," as the case is also in the U.S. and elsewhere, he noted, adding that the powerful military lobby in the U.S. would also pose obstacles for the proposal.

But, he argues, if American executives and policy-makers as well as legislators realise and appreciate that the very policy objective of the aid to the Middle East is to ensure peace in the region then it would also mean a conviction that Israel and Egypt should not remain the sole beneficiaries of aid.

Copies of the proposal

(Continued on page 7)

Israel, Syria prepare for talks on security issues

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel and Syria are to hold talks in the coming days on security arrangements which would allow Israel to withdraw from the strategic Golan Heights ahead of a peace settlement.

U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher announced the resumption of ambassador-level talks in Washington within days at the end of a Middle East peace shuttle last week.

According to Israeli television, Syrian Ambassador Wahid Moallem and Israel's Itamar Rabinovich will be joined at a later stage in the U.S. capital by senior army officers from the two countries.

Full bilateral negotiations have been frozen since February 1994, deadlocked over the scope and timing of an Israeli pullout from the Golan, seized in the 1967 Middle East war.

Syria insists on a full withdrawal, while Israel has proposed a limited pull-back over three years to "test" Damascus's desire for peace.

A senior U.S. official who accompanied Mr. Christopher on his regional tour said it was the first time leaders on both sides had discussed security issues in great detail.

Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said time was running out for reaching a peace accord with Syria before the Israeli general elections, set for November 1996.

But Israel's relations with Syria "are now becoming very appropriate and satisfying," he said.

Israeli leaders are preparing public opinion for a withdrawal from the Golan, but they still avoid giving clear statements on the issue.

Mr. Peres said Israel was ready to pay the necessary price to achieve peace, but we will not pay for nothing.

He was referring to Israel's offer of territorial concessions on the Golan Heights in exchange for full peace with open borders and diplomatic relations.

But he refused to be drawn on the scale of any withdrawal.

Environment Minister Yossi Sarid said the "scope of the withdrawal will correspond to the scope of peace," and insisted Israel was ready for comprehensive peace.

The Israeli government has made it sufficiently clear that it is seeking adequate security guarantees to make a withdrawal from the Golan acceptable to public opinion.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin has promised that any peace deal with Syria will be put to a referendum.

According to Zeev Schiff, military observer of the daily Haaretz, "the big question is whether, in exchange for the heavy price will pay by evacuating the Golan plateau and its settlements, Israel will be able to say that its military and strategic position has not been compromised."

For 27 years Israeli governments have insisted that the Golan is vital for the country's security.

But Mr. Peres now argues that Syria's missile systems have reduced the strategic value of the territory.

The security discussions focus on several key areas: early warning stations (Israel wants to keep the one it has on Mount Hermon).

The establishment of zones on both sides of the future border where all military activity would be banned or strictly limited.

The deployment of international observers on the Golan, including a U.S. contingent.

Limits on armed forces (Israel argues that Syria has far too many regular troops).

One Israeli minister who asked not to be named said Mr. Christopher had obtained Syria's agreement to resume direct talks after Israel had agreed that security arrangements would be applied "in equal measure" on both sides of the border.

However, Israeli leaders argue that such arrangements should not be identical on both sides because Israel is narrower than Syria.

AP adds: Syria on Sunday accused Israel of using the subject of border security in an attempt to sabotage the next round of peace talks.

However, the possibility of agreement was not ruled out.

The government-published Tishrin newspaper said an Israeli undertaking to pull out from the Golan Heights would "pave the way for the subject of security arrangements which should be mutual, equivalent and balanced."

"What threatens the next Washington peace talks is Israel's feverish attempts to make the security arrangements the only negotiable subject, neglecting that the basic subject is the full Israeli withdrawal from the Golan," it said.

"If Israel follows this course, it will confirm its non-seriousness about the peace issue and will uphold the conviction that it is using the security arrangements to undermine the peace process," the paper added.

Another Syrian government daily, Al Thawra, predicted that the Washington talks "will be formidable and difficult due to the Israeli leaders' statements over the Golan issue and which reject the principle of the full pull-out."

The UNHCR "has promised for years to help us, but with no success," he told journalists on a visit organised by the Iraqi information ministry.

In desperation another refugee, Ali Amin Jan, went on hunger-strike outside the UNHCR office in the camp, about 130 kilometres west of Baghdad.

A camp official said he launched his campaign about a month ago when the UNHCR went back on a promise that he had been found a country of asylum.

Over the years the Alrash camp has grown from a handful of shelters into a village sprawling across 24 square kilometres. The stone and mud houses are even connected to water and electricity supplies.

"The Iraqis are helping us, but we have been here long enough and the UNHCR doesn't seem to be worried about our fate," one refugee said.

"The UNHCR gives us meagre food supplies which causes illness and it has a discriminatory attitude towards the refugees," he charged.

But in a statement to AFP the head of the UNHCR mission in Baghdad, Abdulrahman Babak said, said the organisation's duty has always been to allow the refugees to return to their country of origin.

"We have all that is required to be united — natural resources, culture, language, Islam — why is there so much discord and strife?" they complained.

But their general welcome had been warm and hospitable everywhere, with lots of spontaneous offers of help.

In the Sudanese capital Khartoum, "one fine fellow offered us a bundle of blankets," Mr. Kacimi remembered, while in Alexandria people organised a big party for them.

There were some close shaves in war-torn Algeria, where the police got jumpy when crowds gathered enthusiastically round the travellers on their desert mounts.

Now they are on the way by sea from Casablanca to the Lebanese capital Beirut to start the second leg of 6,000 kilometres taking in Syria, Jordan, Iraq and the Gulf emirates, with homecoming to Yemen scheduled for next September.

Mr. Kacimi and Mr. Kadi work at the Yemeni sports ministry, but insist there is nothing official about their camel trip. They stayed tight-lipped about how it was being financed.

All the same, they said, the idea was to pass on a message to the leaders in each country calling on them to strengthen Arab unity and solidarity.



BEST WISHES: Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat congratulates Tunisian bride, Nadia, who married one of his bodyguards, Jamel, after the wedding ceremony in Tunis on Sunday. Mr. Arafat interrupted his meeting of the PLO Executive Committee to give his best wishes to the newly wed couple (AFP photo)

Refugees blame U.N. for broken promise

ALTASH REFUGEES CAMP (AFP) — A refugee has been on hunger strike outside a U.N. office here for almost a month to highlight the plight of 23,000 Iranian Kurds still waiting to go home after 16 years.

The refugees of Kurdish origin arrived in 1979 without a passport, fleeing from northern Iran after the Islamic revolution.

Sixteen years later they say they have been left languishing in the camp after a trail of broken promises by the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

"We want to go back to Iran or find another country of asylum," said 35-year-old teacher Ali Salah Mustafa who has been in the camp for 16 years.

The UNHCR "has promised for years to help us, but with no success," he told journalists on a visit organised by the Iraqi information ministry.

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He said the UNHCR had taken lengthy steps to try to secure their return and overcome Iran's veto of some cases.

Some 12,000 Iranian had asked to be able to return home out of a total of 45,000 refugees in Iraq, he said.

The requests had been sent to the Iranian embassy in Baghdad and a copy passed on to the UNHCR headquarters in Geneva to be forwarded to Tehran.

In 1992 1,500 refugees returned to Iran but the operation was halted because Tehran "wanted to check more closely the identity of the candidates," Mr. Said added.

He said Tehran suspected Baghdad of wanting to sneak Iraqi agents into Iran among the ranks of the refugees allowed to return.

Mr. Said added that in February 43 host countries had been found for the refugees, including Switzerland, the Netherlands and Denmark. But it will still take a long time for formalities to be completed.

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Israeli businessmen upbeat at Cairo International Fair

CAIRO (AFP) — Israeli businessmen attending the Cairo International Fair for the first time for nine years said Saturday they were confident they could reach new clients and boost their profits in Egypt.

"We are very interested in the Egyptian market which may also give access to other Arab markets," said Plada Zvei, representing the Gama Aluminium company, one of 24 Israeli firms attending the fair.

Security was tight at the fair, opened Saturday by Egyptian Prime Minister Atef Sedki, with police vehicles guarding the U.S. and Israeli pavilions.

Israel was participating for the first time since 1986, when one of its embassy employees in Cairo was shot dead as she was leaving the fair.

A representative of Crystal Line, an Israeli manufacturer of beauty products based on minerals from the Dead Sea, said he was "confident" because "we are realistic businessmen seeking profits and I think the Egyptians are realistic, too."

Israeli companies already doing business in Egypt saw the fair as an opportunity to boost sales.

Mohammad Mchanna, representing the Hazera firm which sells fruit and vegetable seeds, said he expected to interest more Egyptian clients.

According to the Egyptian economy ministry, the volume of non-oil trade between the two countries doubled in the first three-quarters of 1994 against the same period the previous year, reaching \$30 million, \$21 million of which consisted of Egyptian exports.

However, a survey published in the English-language Al-Ahram Weekly in December showed that anti-Israeli feeling was still widespread in Egypt, 15 years after it became the first Arab country to sign a peace treaty with the Jewish state.

Seventy-one per cent of Egyptians refused to buy Israeli goods and 75 per cent opposed the establishment of Israeli enterprises in Egypt, the poll showed.

The Cairo fair will continue until March 31.

Some 12,000 Iranian had asked to be able to return home out of a total of 45,000 refugees in Iraq, he said.

The requests had been sent to the Iranian embassy in Baghdad and a copy passed on to the UNHCR headquarters in Geneva to be forwarded to Tehran.

In 1992 1,500 refugees returned to Iran but the operation was halted because Tehran "wanted to check more closely the identity of the candidates," Mr. Said added.

He said Tehran suspected Baghdad of wanting to sneak Iraqi agents into Iran among the ranks of the refugees allowed to return.

Mr. Said added that in February 43 host countries had been found for the refugees, including Switzerland, the Netherlands and Denmark. But it will still take a long time for formalities to be completed.

"We have all that is required to be united — natural resources, culture, language, Islam — why is there so much discord and strife?" they complained.

But their general welcome had been warm and hospitable everywhere, with lots of spontaneous offers of help.

In the Sudanese capital Khartoum, "one fine fellow offered us a bundle of blankets," Mr. Kacimi remembered, while in Alexandria people organised a big party for them.

There were some close shaves in war-torn Algeria, where the police got jumpy when crowds gathered enthusiastically round the travellers on their desert mounts.

Now they are on the way by sea from Casablanca to the Lebanese capital Beirut to start the second leg of 6,000 kilometres taking in Syria, Jordan, Iraq and the Gulf emirates, with homecoming to Yemen scheduled for next September.

Mr. Kacimi and Mr. Kadi work at the Yemeni sports ministry, but insist there is nothing official about their camel trip. They stayed tight-lipped about how it was being financed.

All the same, they said, the idea was to pass on a message to the leaders in each country calling on them to strengthen Arab unity and solidarity.

"At the start, we knew the Arab World was divided politically, and what we have experienced has shown us that the situation only does harm to the people," Mr. Kacimi said.

"We have overcome cold, heat and hunger, and dodged highway bandits, but we could not beat the pride and mistrust of the politicians," he added bitterly.

His companion Kadi cited a five-day delay at the Sudan-Egypt border crossing, and another five days' enforced wait before reaching Morocco. In both cases the pair had to get their government in Sanaa to intervene.

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Policy failures, lack of funds mar Arab League anniversary

CAIRO (AFP) — Policy failures and a financial crisis threaten to cloud the 50th anniversary on Wednesday of the 22-member Arab League — a body set up to boost Arab cooperation but handicapped by internal divisions.

The league's general secretariat plans to call a special meeting of Arab foreign ministers during the anniversary events to tackle the financial crisis.

"This is a basic problem and it must be discussed at ministerial level," said Assistant Secretary General Mohammad Al Sayyid.

Only three member states — Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Bahrain — have paid up their 1995 contributions to the league's annual budget of \$27 million, Oman has paid half its contribution, Mr. Sayyid said.

In 1994 the league was forced to borrow \$4.7 million from its staff's pension fund and one third of its 19 missions abroad, including those in Japan and Brazil, have already been closed.

Some countries have failed to pay their contributions due to economic difficulties — Iraq because of the international embargo and the Comoros, Somalia and Sudan due to lack of funds.

Mr. Sayyid said other members paid their quotas late or contested the amount they were supposed to contribute.

Founded on March 22, 1945 with the aim of boosting Arab political and economic cooperation, the league has experienced a series of policy setbacks, including the failure to resolve the Palestinian problem after the Arab defeat at the hands of Israel in 1948.

The league embraced the Palestinian cause from the start and pushed for international recognition of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) as the sole representative of the Palestinians.

But PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat did not turn to the Arab League when he decided to make his "peace of the brave" with Israel.

The Palestinian issue "which should have united the Arab world instead became a focus of inter-Arab disputes," says Mr. Abu Seif Radi, former Arab League information director.

The league failed to back Egypt in 1956 when France, Britain and Israel decided to "punish" Gamal Abdel Nasser for having nationalised the Suez Canal.

The Arab defeat in the 1967 war with Israel highlighted the weakness of the joint Arab defence pact.

And in the 1973 Arab-Israeli war the oil-rich Gulf states acted outside the framework of the league

when they imposed an oil embargo on the United States and its Western allies.

Egypt's peace treaty with Israel signed in 1979 was a severe blow to the Arab League, prompting it to move its headquarters from Cairo to Tunis and launch a boycott of Egypt.

However, in 1982 Arab leaders adopted the Fald plan in Fez, for the first time implicitly recognising the Jewish state.

The Arab League has also proved incapable of resolving conflicts between its members.

Although it deployed Arab peacekeepers to replace the British in Kuwait in 1961, preventing an Iraqi annexation of the oil-rich emirate, the league failed to stop Iraqi troops invading the country in August 1990.

The league was also powerless to prevent two civil wars in Yemen — in 1962-1969 and in May-July 1994.

In 1976 some 30,000 Arab peacekeepers were sent to Lebanon, but the civil war continued to rage there for another 14 years.

Several Arab leaders, including King Hassan II of Morocco, consider the league's charter to be ineffective because it requires member states to take decisions unanimously, rather than by a majority vote.

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All the same, they said, the idea was to pass on a message to the leaders in each country calling on them to strengthen Arab unity and solidarity.

Dromedary pair on year's round trip

RABAT (AFP) — Two cross-country runners who set out from Yemen in September on a round trip of the Arab World have reached the halfway mark in Morocco — aboard two camels bought in Sanaa for \$1,000 each.

Main is a nine-year-old dromedary, long-limbed like its master Ahmad Abu Zaid Al Kacimi, 33, while six-year-old Dhofer is on the stocky side like its owner Ali Salah Abu Kadi, 43.

They have covered almost 10,000 kilometres in 190 days, reaching Morocco a month ago averaging 70 kilometres a day at a steady speed of 10 kilometres an hour.

After taking a boat across the Red Sea, they started the trip in Entebbe and moved on to Sudan, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia and Algeria. The animals have cost practically nothing so far to maintain, browsing on available grass and drinking as much water as they can once or twice a week.

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Refugees blame U.N. for broken promise

ALTASH REFUGEES CAMP (AFP) — A refugee has been on hunger strike outside a U.N. office here for almost a month to highlight the plight of 23,000 Iranian Kurds still waiting to go home after 16 years.

The refugees of Kurdish origin arrived in 1979 without a passport, fleeing from northern Iran after the Islamic revolution.

Sixteen years later they say they have been left languishing in the camp after a trail of broken promises by the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

"We want to go back to Iran or find another country of asylum," said 35-year-old teacher Ali Salah Mustafa who has been in the camp for 16 years.

The UNHCR "has promised for years to help us, but with no success," he told journalists on a visit organised by the Iraqi information ministry.

In desperation another refugee, Ali Amin Jan, went on hunger-strike outside the UNHCR office in the camp, about 130 kilometres west of Baghdad.

A camp official said he launched his campaign about a month ago when the UNHCR went back on a promise that he had been found a country of asylum.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Egypt, Syria and Gulf states to meet

CAIRO (AFP) — The foreign ministers of Egypt, Syria and six Gulf Arab states will meet Tuesday for talks on the Middle East peace process and ways to boost cooperation in line with the Damascus declaration they signed after the 1991 Gulf war. Under the accord, which has not been implemented, Syria and Egypt are to provide the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) with military aid in return for some \$10 billion worth of economic assistance. The GCC groups Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar and Oman. Egyptian Foreign Ministry officials said the meeting would also cover the renewal of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) — one of the main issues on the agenda of an Arab League foreign ministers' meeting opening here Wednesday. Egypt has threatened not to sign the NPT when it comes up for renewal at the United Nations in April-May unless Israel agrees to sign.

S. Arabia, Egypt discuss position of workers

RIYADH (AFP) — Egyptian Labour Minister Ahmad Al Amawi and Saudi officials Saturday discussed the situation of some 1.2 million Egyptian workers in Saudi Arabia. Egyptian diplomats said here. The talks focused on coordination between job centres in the two countries and renewal of an accord on Saudi seasonal recruitment of Egyptian drivers for the Hajj. Each year the Saudi authorities call on the services of some 13,000 Egyptian drivers for the pilgrimage, due to take place in early May this year. The diplomats said Mr. Amawi and Saudi Labour Minister Muhammad Ali Al Fayez discussed the situation of Egyptian workers in light of a recent crackdown by the authorities on illegal. On Feb. 13 Saudi Interior Minister Prince Nayef Ben Abdul Aziz said more than 100,000 illegal foreign workers had been expelled from the kingdom.

Saudi dissident vows to stay in hiding

LONDON (R) — A Saudi Arabian ex-diplomat and dissident evading deportation from Britain told the Mail on Sunday newspaper he would stay in hiding until his safety was guaranteed. Ahmad Khodair Said Al Zaharani, a former vice-consul at the Saudi consulate in Houston, Texas, failed to turn up twice last week to be deported with his wife and three children and his lawyers said immigration authorities wanted to arrest him. "I will stay in hiding until I can get some guarantees about my safety," he told the paper in a call from a public phone box. "I came to Britain because you believe in freedom and human rights. It is unbelievable but the British want to put me on a plane to America and the Americans say they will send me straight home to Saudi Arabia." Mr. Zaharani came to Britain in 1994 hoping to win political asylum after losing his job at the Saudi consulate. He says he was harassed by Saudi authorities for a university thesis published three years ago under the title "Saudi foreign policy within the Arab sphere 1979-1991." British authorities have rejected his application on the grounds he could have applied in the United States. But his lawyers and supporters say he does not believe an application there would be treated fairly because of the "special relationship" between Washington and Riyadh. Sources close to the Saudi government have said Mr. Zaharani was of no interest to the government and his book was "barren."

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel: 77311-19

PROGRAMME TWO
17:30 Le Prince El La Sirine
17:30 Pyramide
18:30 D'Arignon Amourux
19:00 News in French
19:15 Varieties
19:30 The Bold and the Beautiful
21:00 South Beach
21:45 Diving in the Red Sea
22:00 News in English
22:20 Scarlet and Black

PRAYER TIMES

04:19 Fajr
05:37 (Sunrise) Duha
11:34 Dhuhur
15:10 Asr
17:58 Maghrib
19:00 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Swedish, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terrence Church Tel. 622366
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541
Assiout Church Tel. 630851, Tel. 628543.

Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331.

Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 773261.
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.
Assiout International Church Tel. 625226.
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 624328.
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 694195
The Lutheran Church Tel. 654932
Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691.
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.

Temperatures are expected to rise

Sinn Fein expects talks with U.K. ministers soon

LONDON (Agencies) — Sinn Fein, political wing of the guerrilla Irish Republican Army (IRA), said Sunday it hoped to start Northern Ireland peace talks with British government ministers within a couple of weeks.

Ministerial-level talks with Sinn Fein would be a big step forward in the British and Irish government's drive to end 25 years of strife in the province, a process which has already led to ceasefires by the IRA and its Protestant guerrilla enemies.

Sinn Fein, which wants to end Britain's rule in Northern Ireland, is already taking part in lower-level "exploratory" talks with British officials.

These are designed to bring the Republicans and their hardline extremist foes from the province's pro-British Protestant community round a table with mainstream political parties.

British Prime Minister John Major has insisted Sinn Fein must show it is ready for serious discussion on how the IRA will give up its arms before ministers can join the talks.

But Sinn Fein's Martin

McGuinness said in a series of television interviews the talks could take place soon.

"I am quite hopeful that this could take place in the next 10 to 14 days," he said.

Britain said Saturday it had sent an agenda for talks with ministers to Sinn Fein but stressed this did not mean it was ready to start the unprecedented discussions.

A spokesman from Mr. Major's office said Sunday the position remained that Sinn Fein had to satisfy London it was ready to discuss handing over its weapons before ministerial talks.

The flurry of speculation on the timing of ministerial talks follows a U.S. visit by Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams.

President Bill Clinton's decision to let Mr. Adams into the United States to raise funds for Sinn Fein before it has committed itself on the arms issue enraged London and caused a diplomatic spat.

Mr. Clinton is expected to talk to Mr. Major by phone Sunday to try to patch up relations frayed by the dispute over Mr. Adams, who attended a White House re-

ception with the U.S. president and received a rousing welcome during his visit.

The Sunday Times also reported Sunday that Washington could offer to broker the surrender of IRA arms.

The possibility of a third country overseeing the handover of weapons has already been suggested by British officials and Washington is keen to play a part in the peace process, the newspaper said.

Sinn Fein is keen for the United States to take on the role.

But the Sunday Times said Northern Ireland's Protestant Unionist politicians — so-called because they remain loyal to the province's union with Britain — and some members of Britain's ruling Conservative Party are opposed to the idea.

Meanwhile, James Moynihan, 74, was re-elected leader of the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) here Saturday, defeating a hardline firebrand but pledging to step aside when he felt the time was right.

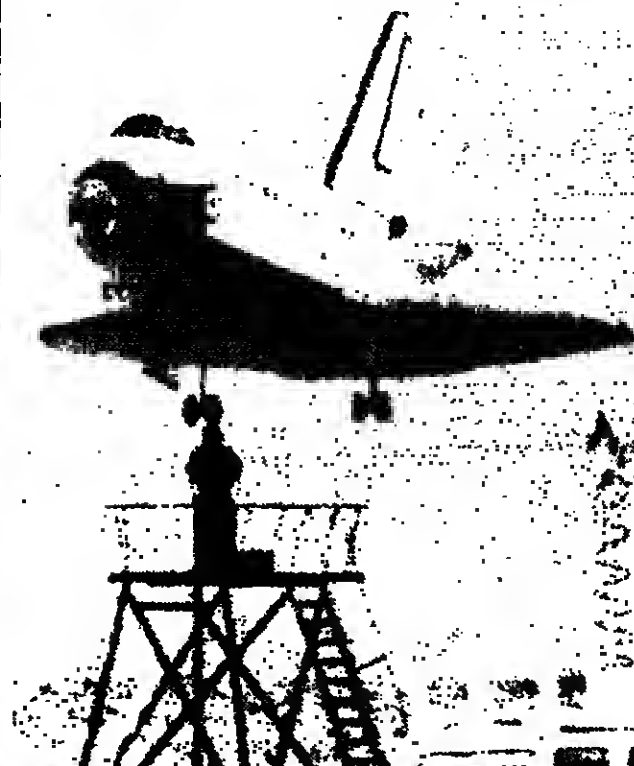
The veteran Unionist leader retained the leadership af-

ter a 521 votes to 88 victory in a ballot by party delegates.

But the vote for his 21-year-old challenger Lee Reynolds revealed the extent of opposition within the party to the recently published blueprint for peace in the North, the Anglo-Irish Framework Document, seen as a further erosion of Unionist power under the wily but ageing Moynihan.

"If I felt, when the bits of the jigsaw come together, that it would be an advantage for a successor to be appointed at an appropriate time — where we could get the broad majority of the party behind the new leader, then I would have a duty to do that," Mr. Moynihan said.

Mr. Reynolds, a student, said Mr. Moynihan had twice let down Unionist interests, first in 1985, when he failed to prevent the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement which gave the Dublin government a watching brief in the North's affairs, and again last month, for failing to provide an effective opposition to the Framework Document.



The space shuttle Endeavour passes an observation platform as it lands at Edwards Air Force Base after being diverted from Florida after a 16-day mission, the longest mission in shuttle history. The Endeavour mission studied stars, planets and other celestial objects with the Astro Observatory (AFP photo)

California landing caps longest shuttle mission

CAPE CANAVERAL (R) — Dismal weather forced seven astronauts to make a detour to California Saturday after postponing their scheduled landing in Florida and establishing a record time of nearly 17 days in space.

Chased from the Kennedy Space Centre by thunderstorms for the second day in a row, Endeavour swooped out of mostly sunny skies to touch down on a breeze-swept runway at Edwards Air Force Base at 1:47 p.m. PST (2147 GMT).

The shuttle landed in the Mojave Desert, some 3,000 miles (4,800 km) west of where ground crews had planned to receive it and its crew at the conclusion of a marathon science journey.

"Welcome home Endeavour, after a fantastic record-setting mission. It will be a tough one to beat and it sure is nice to have 'ya'll home," shuttle commander Curt Brown radioed the crew from Mission Control in Houston, Texas.

"It's nice to be here, Curt," shuttle Commander Steve Oswald radioed back from the cockpit.

The landing capped a flight of in-depth astrophysics research with the Astro Observatory, a \$195 million suite of three ultraviolet telescopes tucked in the shuttle cargo bay. Endeavour spent 16 days, 15 hours and eight

minutes aloft and circled the planet 263 times during the mission, travelling 6.9 million miles (11.1 million km).

The longest of all 68 shuttle missions was to have concluded Friday, but foul weather kept the crew of five men and two women in Earth orbit an extra day. The postponement pushed the flight well beyond the previous duration record of 14 days, 17 hours and 55 minutes.

Soon after touchdown, ground crews helped the astronauts out of the cockpit and began preparing the shuttle for transport back to Florida in about a week. Endeavour's cross-country trip stop a Jump Jet will cost as much as \$3 million, according to National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) officials.

NASA spokesman Roh Navias said thunderstorms surrounding the Kennedy Space Centre for the second day in a row posed "too much of an obstacle" for the returning astronauts.

Even with the switch of landing sites, weather remained a concern. Dust-devils danced at one end of the Edwards runway, shown in television views. Mr. Navias said the winds were "a bit gusty, somewhat brisk, but well within the limits" of safety for the crew.

Japan satellites operate normally after lift-off

TOKYO (R) — Two Japanese satellites, launched by the home-grown H2 rocket Saturday, continued to operate normally Sunday, Japan's space agency said.

"The satellites have been operating normally as scheduled," National Space Development Agency (NASDA) spokeswoman Katsumi Watanabe said.

On Saturday, the all-Japanese rocket went up from the Tanegashima Space Centre on the southwestern tip of Japan's main islands with experimental and weather satellites.

The four-tonne scientific satellite known as the Space Flyer Unit (SFU), currently in preliminary orbit, was expected to settle in orbit 500 kilometres above the Earth Tuesday, Ms. Watanabe said.

After several months of scientific experiments, the satellite will be retrieved by the U.S. space shuttle Endeavour scheduled to be launched in November.

The Geostationary Meteorological Satellite No. 5 (GMS-5), the other satellite launched Saturday by the H2, was designed to replace the ageing Himawari (Sunflower) No. 4 Meteorological Satellite.

The 746 kilogram weather satellite is expected to settle in geostationary orbit 36,000 kilometres above the equator in mid-June, Mr. Watanabe said.

The H2 was made using only domestic technology. Japan's previous launch, the HT, was based on U.S. technology loaned on condition it was not used for commercial launches.

The all-Japanese satellite launcher made its maiden launch in February, 1994, two years behind schedule. Japan has so far launched a total of 27 rockets into space since 1975, and none of them failed although several satellites, failed to make orbit, Ms. Watanabe said.

Despite the successful launching of its home-grown rocket, Japan would not be able to capture a share of the lucrative world satellite trade mainly because of high costs coupled with the strong yen, she said.

"It's still very difficult to carry out commercial launches. We must first bring down launch costs," she said.

She said the appreciation of the yen against foreign currencies would make Japan less competitive.

Former top dancer named Boshoi director

MOSCOW (AFP) — Former top dancer Vladimir Vasiliev, 54, was named new artistic director of the Bolshoi Theatre Saturday by Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, the ITAR-TASS news agency said.

The appointment comes after Russian President Boris Yeltsin Friday sacked former Director Vladimir Kokonin's refusal to perform in a production of Romeo and Juliet. Mr. Kokonin, according to a decree signed by Mr. Yeltsin, had been "transferred to another post," which was not specified. Dismissal between Mr. Kokonin and his artistic director, the chief choreographer Yuri Grigorovich, led to the latter's acrimonious departure last week. He had led the world famous ballet since 1964. The same year, Mr. Vasiliev was voted the world's top ballet dancer by the Paris Academy of Dance, after his performance in the lead role in the Bolshoi's productions of Spartacus, the Nutcracker Suite, Don Quixote and Giselle.

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Singapore premier postpones visit to Philippines over maid's execution

MANILA (R) — Widespread outrage in the Philippines over the hanging of a Filipino maid forced Sunday the postponement of Singaporean Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong's scheduled visit to Manila next month.

Foreign Secretary Roberto Romulo said the visit had been "postponed to a more propitious time" and that he had recommended to President Fidel Ramos the creation of a presidential commission to investigate the case of the executed maid.

"This postponement was reached by mutual agreement between the Philippines and Singaporean governments," Mr. Romulo said in a brief statement he read at a news conference.

Mr. Romulo did not give any reason for the postponement but a senior official said Filipino indignation over the hanging of Flor Contemplacion in Singapore Friday impelled it.

"We felt that the height of emotions are such that we should find a more opportune time for the visit," said the official, who asked not to be named.

Mr. Contemplacion, 42, was hanged for the 1991 murder of another Filipino maid and a three-year-old Singaporean boy.

The hanging for a crime that many Filipinos believe she did not commit sparked threats of reprisals from a Communist guerrilla death squad, street protests and calls for a boycott of Singaporean products and businesses in the Philippines.

Militant groups have also threatened to bound Mr. Goh with demonstrations if he visits.

In Singapore Sunday, police could be seen patrolling the grounds of a major Catholic Church, and were also in evidence at several places where Filipino maids gather on what is traditionally their one day-off each week.

Singapore police said Friday they would arrest members of the local Philippine community if they held a planned public prayer session over the hanging.

The police warned employers of Philippine workers to advise them against such activity. Under Singapore employment contracts, foreign workers are not permitted to take part in political activity.

The warning seemed to have worked. One off-duty Filipino maid, speaking in Tagalog to a visiting Philippines journalist, said, "my employer told me not to speak or join any vigil."

Another maid said she was "very sad" about what had happened to Contemplacion. Both maids did not want to be identified.

A Catholic priest, who also did not want to be identified, told reporters at the church he had been told by police not to say prayers for Ms. Contemplacion at his services.

In Manila, Mr. Romulo said the presidential commission that would look into the case would be headed by a Supreme Court justice, be impartial and thoroughly look into the circumstances that led to the maid's hanging.

"I do not believe that bilateral relations should be held hostage by this incident," he said.

The queen, the first British monarch to visit South Africa in 48 years, arrived to a low-key welcome at Cape Town's windswept D.F. Malan Airport shortly before 11:30 a.m. (0930 GMT).

Dressed in a grey suit with black gloves and shoes, the queen was met by Deputy President Thabo Mbeki and his wife, Zanele.

She was banded a posy of peach-coloured roses by three-year-old Zanele.

The queen, who is visiting in her dual capacity as British head of state and as head of the Commonwealth, which South Africa rejoined last year, will be welcomed officially by President Nelson Mandela Monday, when her formal visit starts.

Queen Elizabeth arrives in South Africa

CAPE TOWN (R) — Britain's Queen Elizabeth arrived Sunday in Cape Town, where she celebrated her 21st birthday in 1947, for a five-day state visit following South Africa's emergence from the shadow of apartheid.

The queen, the first British monarch to visit South Africa in 48 years, arrived to a low-key welcome at Cape Town's windswept D.F. Malan Airport shortly before 11:30 a.m. (0930 GMT).

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U.S. House Republicans expect tough debate on welfare reform

WASHINGTON (R) — Republicans are bracing for a rough debate when their welfare reform bill reaches the House floor Tuesday, amid unrest from some members of their own party and outright opposition from most Democrats.

But Republican lawmakers and congressional aides expect the measure, a key element of House Speaker Newt Gingrich's contract with America, to survive largely intact.

Moderate Republicans who originally opposed some provisions of the bill, which gives states unprecedented control over welfare programs, have won several concessions from the leadership and appear unlikely to break ranks.

"Speaking only for myself, there's a lot of good in the bill. We've got to press forward with welfare reform," said New Jersey Republican Marge Roukema.

Some are still weighing their options, however.

"I'm leaning towards supporting the bill," said Delaware Republican Michael Castle, who said he was concerned it did not contain enough child care funding to enable welfare mothers to go to work.

In an effort to shore up moderate support, Republican leaders will hark an amendment, crafted by Republican women, to increase child care funds by \$750 million.

The House is also expected to pass an amendment requiring states to pass laws yanking the drivers and professional licenses of parents who refuse to pay child support.

Even if moderate

The welfare bill saves about \$65 billion over five years by allowing states to run welfare programs under broad block grants, barring aid to legal immigrants, giving states control of the school lunch and other nutrition programs and cutting the federal program for disabled, poor children.

In an effort to combat illegitimacy, it bars federal cash aid to unwed teenagers under 18 and prohibits additional assistance to mothers who have children while on welfare, the so-called "family cap."

Abortion foes, led by New Jersey Republican Christopher Smith, believe the funding cutoff may persuade some poor women to have abortions. Mr. Smith and Oregon Republican Jim Bunn want to offer amendments that would let states offer vouchers so unwed teenagers and welfare mothers can buy baby supplies.

"I will vote on (on the entire bill) if these amendments are not passed," Mr. Smith said. "If they don't prevail, I think the whole thing is dead that's my sense."

Mr. Smith and Mr. Bunn may pick up support from Democrats who oppose the family cap and unwed teen provisions because they believe they cut money needed to care for young children.

But conservative groups are split on the provisions. The National Right to Life Committee supports Mr. Smith, but the Christian Coalition in February sent a letter to members of Congress opposing the welfare bill.

President Bill Clinton rejected both the "old Washington view that big, bureaucratic, one-size-fits-all government can provide big solutions to America's big problems" and the "new extreme view that government is the source of all our problems, and if we just get rid of it, every problem would go away as well."

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Bhutto seeks U.S. favour as a moderate

KARACHI (R) — Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto is portraying herself as a champion of moderate Islam and free markets to win American sympathy ahead of her visit to the United States next month.

"Because we are a voice for moderation, a voice for markets, not militancy, we are not liked by those who preach militancy," she told Reuters in an interview Saturday.

"That is why we think it is important for the United States to strengthen and support Pakistan in the fight for global values, such as the fight against terrorism, extremism, militancy and narcotics," she said.

Ms. Bhutto, 41, will play host to U.S. President Bill Clinton's wife, Hillary, when the American first lady visits Pakistan next week.

The prime minister, beset by economic and political troubles at home, is due in Washington in the first week of April.

This month's killings of two U.S. consulate workers in Karachi and last month's trial but eventual acquittal of two Pakistani Christians sentenced to hang for blasphemy against Islam have clouded the two high-profile visits.

Ms. Bhutto, eager to wrench the focus back to the improving of economic and political ties between the United States and Pakistan, projected her own image as a bulwark against radical Islam in emotive terms playing on generalised Western fears of fundamentalism.

Her approach, while seek-

"The message that I'm going to be taking to the United States is that Pakistan has long been an ally. We were together in the fight against communism. Together we have taken part in U.N. peacekeeping operations," Ms. Bhutto said.

Her message is also "that Pakistan-U.S. ties have broadened" with over \$4 billion in promised energy investment and "that Pakistan is a modern, moderate Muslim country."

Washington, which funnelled weapons and money to Pakistan for anti-Soviet Afghan Islamic guerrillas in the 1980s, abruptly cut off aid in 1990 on suspicion that its erstwhile ally was building nuclear bombs to rival India's nuclear programme.

The Clinton administration now says the ban, which stopped delivery of F-16 fighters already paid for by Pakistan, has not achieved its non-proliferation goal and is counter-productive.

Ms. Bhutto said it was time to settle the dispute, again summoning the spectre of "militancy" to argue her case.

"I feel that the situation is complicated," she said, "because Pakistan has paid for \$1.2 billion worth of military equipment and we have neither received the equipment nor our money back."

"I fear that this is fuelling militancy in the country and I would like to focus U.S. attention on this so that we can find ways to resolve issues which undermine the forces of moderation in our country."

Ms. Bhutto, hammering

ded to the United States from Pakistan last month.

She said the attempt on her life, unsupported at the time, came to light only after the extradition of Mr. Yousef, wanted in the United States for allegedly organising the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Centre in New York.

Ms. Bhutto said the alleged attack, aborted

World News

Russians prepare to take Argun

ARGUN, Russia (AFP) — Russian troops near Argun are gearing up for the decisive battle for the town, one of the bastions of the separatist Chechen forces.

The town has been heavily shelled by Russian artillery for the past few days and bombed from the air. The only vehicles now using the main road are Russian tanks coming from Grozny, the Chechen capital seized by Moscow's forces at the end of February.

Journalists are seldom allowed into tank convoys to help compile reports. This AFP correspondent joined a unit but heard several times it would be "the last time." The atmosphere here is tense, conversations kept short.

The tanks crossed numerous road-blocks where troops from Russia's Interior Ministry (OMON) carefully controlled all comings and goings. Soldiers are searched on their return from the Argun front "to make sure they haven't brought back anything that does not belong to them," said Ivan Konkov, an officer, at a road-block five kilometres from Grozny.

"The troops are regularly fed, they're given not only food but also drinking water which is supplied from outside Chechnya," he added.

The tank stopped at a base from where the Russians were shelling Argun. The guns of ten partially-hidden tanks pointed toward the town, firing salvoes at a regular rate.

Camouflaged tents had been erected in a nearby wood from where plumes of smoke emerged from makeshift stoves set up here and there.

Meanwhile a Russian military helicopter has crashed in the mountains of southern Chechnya, killing all three crewmembers, the ITAR-TASS agency reported Sunday, citing a Russian military source.

The chopper came down in thick fog, the source said, without saying when the crash had happened.

Russian helicopters have in recent weeks been bombing the mountains in the south of the breakaway Caucasus republic, where Chechen separatists have been setting up bases for a protracted guerrilla war against Russian troops who intervened on Dec. 11 to crush a three-year-old bid for independence.

The separatists are still holding a handful of small towns south of the capital Grozny, but most observers believe it is only a matter of time before they retreat to the hills.

Finnish opposition confident of poll win

HELSINKI (R) — Finns voted Sunday in an election likely to catapult opposition Social Democrats (SDP) into power after four years of economic turmoil.

SDP Chairman Paavo Lipponen, tipped to be the next prime minister, appeared confident and relaxed when he cast his ballot early in the day in a working-class Helsinki district.

"I think it is going to go pretty well for us. I feel it, having met people," 53-year-old Lipponen told Reuters.

His party, in opposition during Finland's deepest peacetime slump since independence from Russia in 1917, has pledged to do more to cut a jobless rate of almost 20 per cent.

"We've got poverty in the big cities now, big problems in big cities, that's something new in Finland," Mr. Lipponen said.

The centre-right government of Prime Minister Esko Aho outraged many voters by raising taxes and cutting spending to try to control mounting state debt.

In the election, voters are choosing between 18 political parties and 2,083 candidates who competed for the 200 seats in the Finnish parliament, the Eduskunta.

About 3,700 polling stations around the vast country of five million opened at 9 a.m. (0700 GMT) and closed at 8 p.m. (1800 GMT).

Finns have the chance to achieve a world first by voting into office a parliament in which women outnumber men. A women's group is aiming to get 101 women elected, from the present 77.

The last opinion poll, published Friday, said the SDP would become the biggest party with 27.4 per cent of the vote compared with 22.1 per cent in the 1991 election. The SDP was last in power between 1987 and 1991.

Its two main rivals, Mr. Aho's agrarian-based Centre Party and the Conservative Party, each scored 17.6 per cent in the survey, down from the 1991 election result.

The SDP is expected to form a coalition government with one of these two parties, both currently in government. It may take weeks of tough haggling between the parties before President Martti Ahtisaari can appoint a new government.

"A quick formation of government is preferable and it won't be a surprise if the president fires the starting shot as early as Monday," the daily Hufvudstadsbladet said Sunday.

Crisis in Ukraine's Crimea goes off the boil as Meshkov heads for Moscow

SIMFEROPOL, Ukraine (AFP) — A crisis over Crimean demands for independence from Ukraine went off the boil here Sunday as Crimean President Yuri Meshkov prepared to bring to Moscow his case for closer ties with Russia.

Both Ukrainian and Crimean officials said that the situation in this Crimean capital was quiet Sunday, and denied earlier weekend reports that Ukrainian forces had cordoned off the Crimean parliament.

"Everything is calm," a Crimean parliament official, Rima Lebedeva, said. The chairman of Crimean television, Valery Astakhov, said a small group of about 20 people was demonstrating unhindered outside the parliament building.

Ukrainian officials also denied reports that the Ukrainian government had sent 20 armoured vehicles and back-up troops to Simferopol.

The Ukrainian Interior Ministry official in charge of Crimea, General Vitaly Kirichenko told AFP: "There are no armoured vehicles moving in the peninsula, particularly not towards Simferopol."

There has been "no reinforcement of patrols in the streets of Simferopol and there is no question of imposing a curfew," he added. Independent eye-witness reports confirmed his remarks.

Gen. Kirichenko attributed the rumours of military intervention to "those who have an interest in destabilising the situation."

The Ukrainian authorities maintained that they had dispatched the deputy interior minister, Valeri Chernikov, to Simferopol with 200 special troops not to intimidate the Crimean parliament but to step up the fight against crime.

This justification has resonance in Crimea because most of the peninsula's citizens believe the district is controlled by the mafia, according to a poll published here in January.

Meanwhile, Mr. Meshkov announced plans to visit Moscow Monday in an apparent bid to muster Russia's support for Crimean independence from Ukraine, the news agency Interfax said.

He was armed with a resolution, passed by the Crimean parliament Saturday, calling on Russia to refuse to sign any treaty with Ukraine "that does not take into account the interests of Crimea and its citizens."

This was an attempt to exploit a draft friendship and cooperation treaty between Russia and Ukraine. The treaty is expected to be signed soon by Mr. Kuchma and Russian President Boris Yeltsin.

The Russian authorities have so far held aloof from the dispute, calling it a domestic Ukrainian affair.

The reports of Ukrainian military intervention came after deputies of Crimea in emergency session had threatened Saturday to organise a referendum on declaring independence.

It was the latest move in a long-running power struggle between Kiev and Crimea, an autonomous region on the southern fringes of Ukraine which has a majority Russian-speaking population seeking closer ties with Moscow.

Burma's Shan rebels step up guerrilla attacks

MAE SAI, Thailand (Agencies) — Guerrillas loyal to Burma's opium warlord Khun Sa ambushed a Burmese army unit on the outskirts of a northeastern town as government troops continued an offensive against the separatist rebels, guerrillas said Sunday.

Twenty fighters from Khun Sa's Mong Tai Army (MTA) attacked and destroyed a Burmese army truck on the outskirts of Tachilek, a bustling border trading town opposite the Thai town of Mae Sai, late Saturday afternoon.

Guerrilla officials, speaking on the border, said the truck was completely destroyed when it was hit with a rocket-propelled grenade just outside Tachilek's Airfield.

The guerrillas fought a brief battle with government troops stationed at the airfield before withdrawing into nearby forest, the officials said.

"We want to destroy the new weapons and ammunition supplies they're bringing in," a guerrilla source told Reuters.

Burmese army casualties in the ambush were not yet known while no guerrillas were killed or injured, they said.

Thai officials stationed on the border said Sunday there were as yet no plans to close the frontier to the hundreds of tourists, both Thai and foreign, who cross into Tachilek every day.

Burmese government forces began a push against a guerrilla base area in mountains 25 kilometres west of Tachilek last week.

Clashes, at times heavy, have continued since then and the guerrillas said hundreds of government reinforcements were Sunday moving into the area.

While MTA fighters and government forces are locked in battle in the mountains of southeastern Shan state, units of guerrillas have infiltrated into government-held lowland areas to harass Burmese forces, the guerrillas said.

The MTA blown up two bridges on the main road linking Tachilek with central Burma and southern China, one on Friday and another, just to the east of the town of Kengtung, early Saturday, guerrilla officials said.

They detonated a large bomb killing several government troops on another road Thursday, they said.

Twenty MTA fighters have been killed since the offensive began while more than 70 government troops have been killed, the guerrillas said.

The guerrillas say Burmese forces are trying to clear them from the economically important eastern section of Shan state.

Tachilek lies at the centre of a planned economic development zone known as the Growth Quadrangle linking booming Thailand and southern China with resource-rich Burma and Laos.

MTA Commander Khun Sa says he is a Shan nationalist fighting for the independence of Shan state. Burma's military government says he is a drug-trading bandit who must be destroyed.

Khun Sa, who says he only taxes opium traders in his area of control in the opium-growing Golden Triangle region, has been indicted in the United States on narcotics-trafficking charges.

Meanwhile, Bo Mya, the dominant military figure in Burma's Karen rebel movement for roughly three decades, has transferred control over military forces to one of his assistants, an official statement said Sunday.

General Tamla Baw has been promoted to commander-in-chief of the Karen National Union's (KNU) Liberation Army, or KNUA, after a nine-day emergency meeting of 44 of the insurgency's senior officials, according to a KNU statement obtained here.

Gen. Bo Mya, 68, would officially retain his post as KNU President and remain the primary leader of the movement, a KNU official told AFP Sunday.

The decision followed two stinging defeats for the KNU at the hands of the Rangoon junta and mounting demands by the insurgency's young members to restructure or replace the leadership.

Rangoon soldiers, led by Karen defectors, stormed the KNU headquarters of Mawlaik in late January and, two weeks later, took the last major Karen stronghold in Burma, the Kawmura camp which was once Bo Mya's personal base of operations.

With the movement in apparent disarray, the KNU's central committee convened an emergency meeting at an undisclosed location on March 7. One official said Sunday that the committee would likely meet again "within a month."

Also appointed at the first emergency session was Arthur Shwe, most recently the spokesman for the KNU, to the post of foreign affairs minister, the statement said.

More changes were expected, as an "organising department" headed by the KNU's justice minister was to address "the defects and weaknesses within the KNU," the statement added.

KNU officials Sunday were quick to label the changes as minor, saying that Bo Mya's transfer of military power was not likely to result in any alteration of strategy.

U.K. calls for new European defence structure

CARCASSONNE, France (R) — Britain called Sunday for a European defence structure, formally outside the European Union with NATO remaining the keystone to the continent's security.

Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd outlined London's ideas for a more European element to defence at an informal meeting of EU foreign ministers in the southern French city of Carcassonne.

The plan, which has been touted for some weeks, will be Britain's approach to defence when the question is raised in next year's review by the EU of its institutions and structure.

"I would guess that the (review's) results... would not be very far from this," Mr. Hurd told reporters.

Reflecting Britain's reluctance to go much further in European Union integration, London's proposal envisages joint defence controlled by an organisation that runs parallel to the EU but not within it.

The plan would use the Western European Union (WEU), an existing but essentially inactive European defence structure, to coordinate joint European actions in such areas as peacekeeping, and providing humanitarian relief.

Other defence issues, such as wars, would be handled by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, which includes non-European countries Canada and the United States.

"NATO is the bedrock of our defence and security," a British position paper said.

Britain also wants the leaders of the 10 WEU member-nations, all of which are in the EU, its three associate members and five observer countries to hold regular summits after EU summits, which take place every six months.

"Turkey, Iceland and Norway are WEU associates. EU members Denmark, Ireland, Finland, Sweden and Austria are the observers."

From London's point of view, the separate summits would allow for defence cooperation between governments without directly involving the EU.

Mr. Hurd said a few countries had comments on the proposal and that it had been well received. He said it would be discussed in more depth at a WEU ministerial meeting in Lisbon in May.

Most EU countries want a future joint defence policy to be conducted by member states and not to involve EU institutions such as the European Commission or the European Parliament.

It is not clear, however, how many would be happy to see defence policy conducted outside the EU.

German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel, for example, told reporters he did not see any reason to create a second chain of command in the European defence field.

Serb forces break through Bosnian army lines in Bihac

SARAJEVO (Agencies) — Serb and Serb-backed Muslim rebels have broken through Bosnian government lines in the northwest Bihac enclave, the U.N. Protection Force (UNPROFOR) spokesman said here Sunday, citing initial reports.

The reports suggested that breakaway Croatian Serbs and their Muslim rebel allies "may have made some gains" to the east of Velika Kladusa, in the north of the pocket, Lieutenant-Colonel Gary Coward said.

Bosnian radio-television has spoken of strong enemy artillery and infantry attacks in the area Saturday afternoon.

On Saturday morning, UNPROFOR reported that Serb coalition forces had been seen moving trucks and personnel north from Mala Kladusa towards Velika Kladusa.

Some 372 detonations — U.N. terminology for mortar and artillery fire — were reported in the Velika Kladusa area Saturday. Some 60 more detonations were reported there Sunday morning.

The Bosnian government has repeatedly warned it would have to break off the four-month truce, which runs out at the end of next month, if its forces in Bihac came under intolerable pressure.

Meanwhile three-Muslim Bosnian army soldiers in the government-held Bihac enclave have been arrested on suspicion of murdering a Bosnian Croat army officer who disappeared more than a week ago.

A military court judge ordered the arrests Wednesday, according to the evening news bulletin on TV BiH in Sarajevo.

The officer, General Vlado Santic, commanded the enclave's HVO forces, the Bosnian Croat paramilitary allied to Bosnian army troops which is battling rebel Muslims backed by Serbs from neighbouring Croatia.

The three detainees, named as Ramiz Bajramovic, Jasmin Topal, and Ramiz Ruznic, were ordered held for 30 days while a military court investigated the case, the television report said.

The general's disappearance, initially reported by Croatian media on March 9, has strained relations between the mainly Muslim Bosnian authorities and the Bosnian Croats.

For most of 1993, government Muslim forces and Bosnian Croats in central Bosnia fought a bloody war. Now, the two are allied in a loose federation that has never jelled.

In besieged Bihac, though, relations between the HVO and the Bosnian army 5th Corps remained generally cordial.

Bosnian Croat and Croatian regular forces have engaged breakaway Croatian Serb forces in an artillery duel in southwest Bosnia, U.N. Protection Force spokesman Major Herve Gourmelon said Sunday.

This was the first report of such action near the Croatian coast in several weeks.

Bosnian HVO forces fired some 25 mortar and artillery shells at positions held by breakaway RSK Krajina Serbs in the Livanjsko Polje Valley, northwest of Livno, on Saturday.

The RSK forces fired back some 30 shells.

A Russian U.N. military observer has been arrested by Bosnian Serbs at a checkpoint outside Sarajevo, UNPROFOR spokesman Alexander Ivankov said in Sarajevo Sunday.

Major Alexei Nikoloyenko, 32, was taken from a U.N. vehicle in which he was travelling to Tuzla, central Bosnia, in the company of a Norwegian military observer. The Norwegian and the car were released.

The Serbs were reported to have said they had "good reasons to detain him."

The incident occurred Saturday at the "Sierra 3" Serb checkpoint, leading out of town, but this did not appear to be a local initiative, informed sources suggested.

Maj. Nikoloyenko was held overnight at Ildiza Police Station, just outside Sarajevo and negotiations were underway Sunday in a bid to have him released.

UNPROFOR has issued a "strong protest" in connection with his detention.

Maj. Nikoloyenko, one of 9 Russian military observers deployed in Bosnia, carried a diplomatic passport and was not armed. He had been based in Tuzla since Nov. 9.

U.N. officers said Sunday that NATO aircraft flying over Sarajevo were on a training mission, not responding to a Serb attack on a private convoy west of the besieged capital.

U.N. peacekeepers had reported that the United Nations had requested NATO warplanes to make a show of force against Serb units firing at trucks using a mountain road into the city.

Col. Coward later denied that U.N. report. "The additional aircraft over Sarajevo today were here on training flights," he said.

"We have categorically not requested additional air presence over the area as a deterrent today."

The roar of NATO jets reverberated across Sarajevo on a clear, cool Sunday morning. Many residents lifted their eyes to the sky to see what the fuss was about, two and a half months into a ceasefire that covers most of Bosnia.

A convoy heading down the Mount Igman route came under fire Saturday from a Serb-held suburb, forcing a truck off the road and killing a driver, U.N. Major Pierre Chavancy said.

Saturday night's attack marked the fourth time in a week that Bosnian Serb gunners had fired on private convoys trying to make their way down the steep mountain road into Sarajevo.

EU offers Russia long-term relationship

CARCASSONNE, France (R) — European Union (EU) foreign ministers have offered Russia a long-term special relationship with the West if it overcomes problems on Chechnya and drops its objections to NATO's expansion.

At informal talks in the southern French town of Carcassonne, the 15 EU ministers agreed it was vital not to exclude or isolate Russia despite Western disapproval of its military crackdown in the rebel Republic of Chechnya.

They said the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) should in due course negotiate an agreement with Moscow that would create a special consultation mechanism in crises, a regular political dialogue and a mutual non-aggression pledge.

"We should consider an agreement, treaty or charter between the Atlantic alliance and Russia in parallel with the enlargement of NATO to show Russia that we are not neglecting it," French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe said.

The key condition was that President Boris Yeltsin drop his opposition to former Warsaw Pact allies such as Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia joining the Western alliance.

A British official stressed that there was no question of giving Russia a veto right over future European security arrangements. The agreement would be based on the principle of "no vetoes and no surprises," he said.

The ministers agreed that Moscow had not yet sufficiently changed its behaviour in Chechnya to meet their conditions for signing an interim EU-Russia trade agreement.

But they noted progress towards accepting a permanent presence of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the British official said he hoped enough progress would have been made by April 10 to allow EU ministers to sign the deal.

The EU ministers, acting virtually as a European caucus within NATO, may face some reluctance from the United States to enter into any formal agreement with Moscow beyond a Partnership for Peace agreement already negotiated.

Russia refused last December to sign that document until it received satisfactory clarification on NATO's expansion plans.

EU officials said some of the necessary assurances were contained in a recent letter from U.S. President Bill Clinton to Mr. Yeltsin stressing that NATO enlargement was not aimed against Russia and would pose no threat to it.

But a German official said: "However you phrase it, we are talking about moving the frontiers of NATO from one place to another, and that other place is right on Russia's western border. That is hard for them to swallow."

Mr. Juppe said the EU had plenty of leverage, not only because its trade volume with Russia is three times the combined total of the United States, Japan and China, but also because Moscow wanted to join Western-dominated economic institutions.

He said the EU agreed that Russia should eventually join the World Trade Organisation, keep its seat at the political part of the annual Group of Seven industrial powers' summit and he associated with negotiations on export controls for sensitive technologies.

Diplomats said the problem was balancing willingness to help Russia and recognition of its fragile internal situation with demands for it to pursue reform policies, respect human rights and ease its behaviour in Chechnya.

Mr. Juppe publicly stressed the importance of Russia sticking to its election timetable, an apparent reference to calls by some Yeltsin supporters to postpone next year's presidential poll.

European nations, hoping to stop the flames of ethnic conflict spreading across the continent, seal agreements this week intended to defuse potential disputes and prevent more Yugoslav-style wars.

EU foreign ministers, Eastern Europe, the Baltic states and Russia meet Monday and Tuesday to sign a stability pact that deals with the rights of ethnic minorities and sensitive questions of national borders.

The pact, initially proposed by France and backed by the EU, is supposed to make sure that former Soviet Bloc states which have a chance of joining Western institutions will resolve such problems long before they are admitted to NATO or the EU.

While laying the groundwork for what is hoped will be a more stable Europe, it could also give a badly-needed boost to the prestige of French Prime Minister Edouard Balladur.

Mr. Balladur, who launched the stability pact at a conference last May, is trailing his chief rival, Jacques Chirac, in polls ahead of presidential elections to be held in April and May.

More than 50 countries will be at the Paris meeting, which will include a joint political declaration pledging respect for borders and minorities, as well as around 80 separate bilateral and multilateral agreements on specific problems.

Negotiated over the last year, these cover everything from border controls in the Baltics to the rights of the 600,000 ethnic Hungarians in Slovakia.

"The logic of the stability pact is mutual trust," Bertrand De Montferand, diplomatic adviser to the French Prime Minister, told reporters in Paris last week.

Eastern European states, many of whom hope to join the EU by the year 2000, were initially suspicious of the idea and complained that they were being forced to go along with it as a precondition for membership.

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Jordan Times advertising department.

Building peace is a joint responsibility

THE VERY fact that the Clinton administration devised and used a skillful manoeuvre to push through the Senate a supplemental bill that would allow the write-off of up to \$488 million of Jordan's official debts to the U.S. is strongly indicative of Washington's resolve to live up to the pledge it made to the Kingdom last year. Hopefully, the bill, worked out over the phone by U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, who was then in the Middle East, and key Republican and Democrat senators last week, will survive in its entirety in the joint Senate-House of Representatives deliberations. However, if the net outcome is a halfway compromise between the two houses of the American legislature, then the issue of debt write-off would continue to haunt us for some time. Even if the full measure as proposed in the bill were to be adopted by the Senate the actual write-off would come in two tranches and we would have to wait until 1996 before we are fully assured that the burden is behind us. The Clinton administration is fully sympathetic to how Jordan feels about the whole thing, and we are hopeful that it would exert the necessary effort to ensure that the Kingdom is relieved of the debt burden once and for all and as soon as possible.

However, the major issue is still ahead of us. Jordanians, who were heartened to hear President Bill Clinton tell Parliament on Oct. 26 that the U.S. was committed to Jordan's economic and security needs, were dismayed that the administration was proposing only \$43 million in economic and military assistance to the Kingdom for fiscal 1996, a tiny fraction of the actual needs of Jordan.

Jordan has a proven record of using resources and funds, local and foreign, to optimum benefit. Jordanian industries and infrastructure ascertain the Kingdom's optimum utilisation of resources.

Jordan's courageous step of making peace with Israel has strengthened the U.S. objective of ensuring peace and stability in a region where it has vital economic and commercial interests.

The state of peace between Jordan and Israel allows the Kingdom to play a higher profile role in trying to narrow the gaps between other Arab parties and Israel. However, the Kingdom cannot do that while preoccupied with pressing economic and financial problems.

Above everything else is the reality that Jordan is not a new friend of the U.S. Jordanian-American relations go back several decades during which the Kingdom has proved to be one of the most stabilising factors in the Middle East.

His Majesty King Hussein is due in Washington next week for talks with President Clinton. No doubt the key topic for discussion would be the issue of Jordan's economic and security needs. We understand that the domination of Congress by "fiscally conservative" Republicans is the main stumbling block in the Clinton administration's quest to secure aid for Jordan and other Third World Nations. But then the White House has a multitude of options to secure aid for Jordan. And the United States has good reasons to do so that go beyond its responsibility to honour the pledges it made to the Kingdom. Building and protecting peace in the Middle East is a vital U.S. and international interest.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

AL RA'I Arabic daily on Sunday dealt in its editorial with Bahraini Information Minister Tareq Al Mu'ayyad's visit to Jordan. The newspaper said the visit demonstrates the depth of the brotherly Jordanian-Bahraini relations and stresses the two countries' keenness to achieve Arab solidarity. It said the two countries base their stands on their comprehensive vision of the Arab status quo and the challenges facing the Arabs in all their countries. The Bahraini minister's meeting with His Majesty King Hussein and senior Jordanian officials emphasises that the common interests of Jordan and Bahrain are eventually the interests of all Arab countries and that any success achieved by Jordan in any field is a success for Bahrain and for all the Arabs just as any success achieved by any other Arab country is consequently a success for the whole Arab World, the newspaper added.

A COLUMNIST in Al Dustour, Taher Al Adwan, on Sunday tackled the issue of Jordanian debts to the United States. He said writing the debts off has now become an issue of compromise between the two chambers of the American Congress, with the representatives wanting to write off \$50 million and the Senate deciding to write off \$275 million. The writer said no matter what a compromise the two chambers reach, the U.S. commitments to supporting the peace process were greatly harmed since the credibility of the U.S. in carrying out commitments it pledged towards the peace process are at stake. He said the U.S. is not carrying out its role in the Middle East peace process. Washington's commitment to write off Jordanian debts was an encouraging indicator that the Clinton administration could play an economic role supporting the peace process, he said. He added that events taking place in the Congress and elsewhere in the world affirm that Washington is unable to honour all its commitments towards the Jordanians and the Palestinians.

Human Rights File

Animals have rights too

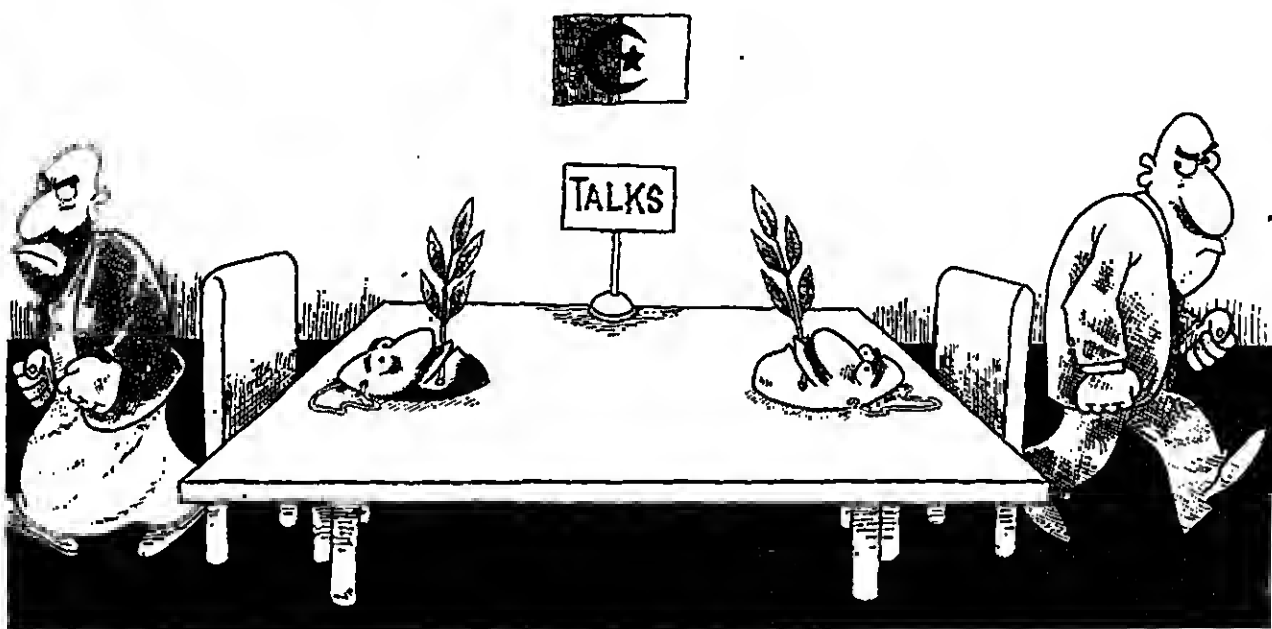
THE OTHER day my little daughter, sensing that I keep on writing about human rights, asked me if animals also have rights. I was touched by her concern, especially when she decided to write about the subject herself as part of her homework. I encouraged her to speak out her heart and mind on the subject although I warned her that many people would ridicule such an interest and show greater insensitivity towards it than she can imagine. Yes, I also added, that Islam is quite strong on animal rights contrary to the common view and sentiment entertained by Muslims these days.

This being the case, all forms of cruelty to animals should be criminalised, if we wish to be faithful to our religious convictions. Oddly enough, Jordan has some legislation on this subject, basically reflected in the Penal Code. Article 472 stipulates that whoever leaves a domesticated animal without food or wantonly neglects it or beats it severely or burdens it too much or tortures it or puts it to work when it is sick, old or wounded, will be punished with imprisonment up to one week and fined up to five dinars.

But the problem with the Jordanian concern is not confined only to the meager laws on cruelty to animals and the relatively light punishment imposed on violators, but rather extended to the fact that the state never exercises even this modest protection. Name me a case when a court of law has sentenced a person who mistreated an animal to jail. Better still, show me one single article that has been written on the subject. To be sure, people are so callous about animal rights to the extent of making a mockery of it and of those who show the least perturbation about the phenomenon. There can be no doubt that cruelty to animals goes on in the country every day. Instead of having

a culture against it, we have developed a counter culture to condone the practice. To show optimum contempt for the animal cause, people would cynically remind you that human beings in the Arab World have yet to attain their human rights much less to start shedding tears on the plight of animals. Putting all these negative thoughts aside, I, and many others here in Jordan, would agree that it is high time that we caught up with other nations of the world by legislating more on the problem. There is little doubt that a great deal could and should be done to protect animals from human savagery. We are blessed with a religion that is very progressive on animal protection. Prophet Mohammad told his people not to kill animals even during war time. Such as the Islamic concern about animal rights. What is wantonly lacking is public awareness of the problem and the absence of a state policy to do anything about it. Most advanced countries of the world have national societies for the protection of animals. We may not be as advanced as the Western world to create such a national force to speak out on behalf of the other creatures of God. Or worse still, we may still choose to make a mockery of animal rights as if such rights are alien to our best traditions and religious mores. But when a child less than 10 years old reminds us of those things and pledges to pursue them, then there is still hope that we are not as indifferent to this concern as most of us pretend to be. There are countless Jordanians, young and old, who have an inborn compassion towards animals. There are also many who are cruel to them. The struggle between these two camps must be won by the side which is closer to the norms of developed countries, intellectually and materially.

M. KAHIL



For the dollar, no bottom in sight and nothing to do

By Rudiger Dornbusch

CAMBRIDGE, Massachusetts — There is great excitement about the dollar having passed historic lows against the yen and the Deutschmark. Three questions seek answers.

Are there plausible reasons for the deep dip, or is this just another instance of markets going on a binge? That is, do fundamentals support a deeply discounted dollar? Yes, and more on this below.

Second, where is this going to end? Are we about to see a bottom, or is there a lot more to come? Answer: No bottom yet!

So should policymakers passively stand by or is there a role to be played? Here the answer is squarely "Hands off!"

The dollar's decline comes as no surprise. The exact timing and the precise magnitude are news, of course, but not the basic fact of a dollar on the skids.

Four factors are behind the decline, and when they all align, as is the case now, the pace can get fast and the decline major.

The first is that in the last quarter of a century the dollar has steadily declined against the mark and the yen. Inflation differentials, differentials in productivity growth and very different attitudes toward deficits are the explanation. These underlying trends continue, and therefore, on average, we should expect the dollar to keep doing the same.

The prospect of a need for trend depreciation is also emphasised by the persistent U.S. current account deficit.

Investors need to be paid to accept increasing exposure in U.S. assets. Either they get high and rising interest

differentials in the United States, which is not the case, or the dollar has to come off enough to gain an upside potential. To have upside potential it must, of course, steadily fall, and even quite a bit.

The second factor is the current situation in Germany and the United States. In Germany the wage bargaining suggests that inflation may have near-bottomed and the Bundesbank accordingly is likely to raise rates. In the United States the soft landing scenario is widely believed, and the chances of rate increases have become minor.

The relative tightening in Germany supports the strengthening of the mark. U.S. and German inflation rates are not that different, but in Germany the prevailing level is unacceptably high, while in the United States it is seen as blissfully low. That is why the mark is on the rise.

Third, fiscal policy differences support the mark. Germany is on the path to sharply cutting budget deficits, while in the United States rejection of the balanced budget amendment highlights a complete unwillingness to do much about deficits, now or later.

The fourth factor supporting the mark's rally is that investors need not fear punitive intervention or a surprise shift in monetary policy.

In Germany, "internal stability before external stability" guarantees that the Bundesbank will not shift to a strategy of low interest rates to unhook the mark's rise. In the United States, the delight with a soft landing strategy, increasingly apparent and successful, clearly means that the

Federal Reserve is not in a position to make a recession "just" to strengthen the dollar. Nobody in America cares about the dollar, and everybody agrees not to have a recession.

In the same way, there need not be fear about massive intervention. Germany does not believe in it unless it is backed by changes in monetary policy, and Treasury Secretary Robert E. Rubin has made enough money on the other side of the street to know that intervention does not accomplish much. Thus, speculators can feel safe piling into the Deutschmark. Nobody will jump out of the bushes to hit them with a surprise.

There is a good dollar-mark story, but how does Japan fit into all of this? In the past there has been a high correlation in dollar-mark and dollar-yen exchange rate changes. When the mark goes up, the yen goes up. We don't have to listen to the details. If markets believe that the mark will rise, they immediately trade the yen in the same direction, and they will rarely be wrong.

This time, the mark has had the story and the yen has taken the ride. In the past, for example during U.S.-Japanese trade rifts that translated into a yen rally, it was the other way around.

Among the reasons for a weak dollar I do not include Mexico. If you are looking for trouble spots, ask yourself who is more bankrupt, Mexico or Japan's banking system. The answer is unambiguous.

Or ask who had more trouble among its neighbours — Germany next to Italy (with a public debt about to bounce) and Greece and

Spain and a lot more, or the United States with Mexico, which admittedly is a mess? Mexico is a sideshow in the dollar issue.

Is there anything policymakers can and should do in this situation of seemingly endless dollar decline? There is nothing they can or should do in Germany or the United States.

In Germany there is no reason to lower rates; in the United States there is no reason to raise rates. German policy on the budget is right; U.S. budget policy is too complacent, but it is in the hands of Congress and far beyond the reach of the administration.

Authorities should maintain orderly markets, but there is little purpose in setting targets and defending them half-heartedly. Surely the U.S. Treasury is not looking for more scars, with Mexico already a terrible lesson in defending the indefensible.

Is there room for a policy response in Japan? Yes. Japan could cut interest rates toward zero. (In America they were virtually zero in the 1930s). Besides solving banking problems and helping recovery, that would surely contain the yen zoom and stabilise the Deutschmark. Is that likely to happen? Surely not.

The Bank of Japan probably thinks big inflation is around the corner once again, deflation notwithstanding. With so many hang-ups in its central bank, Tokyo deserves an overly strong yen.

The writer, Ford International Professor of Economics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, contributed this comment to the International Herald Tribune.

U.N. dances to Washington's tune

By Richard Dowden

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT, the United States ambassador to the United Nations, spends more time in Washington than New York these days. Her job is supposed to be representing the concerns of the U.S. to the world through the U.N. but she is busier trying to persuade the new Republican majority in Congress that the United Nations is an OK organisation and that the American contribution to its coffers is money well spent.

It appears to be a struggle in a political climate evoked by a recent cartoon in the Washington Post depicting a man standing in front of the U.N. building in New York, carrying a placard saying: "U.N. go home." Misquoting Milton, one observer described Ms. Albright's task in Washington as justifying the ways of Satan to God.

Some observers see U.S. foreign policy going isolationist but in fact America has never been more involved in the rest of the world through trade, political power and influence. The important debate is not between isolationists and globalists but between multilateralists who see the U.S. as a global leader, moving and working with allies, and the unilateralists trying it to do whatever it wants, when it wants, how it wants, with no justification other than American self-interest. The U.N. appears a large obstacle to the unilateralist vision.

Robert Dole, the Republican leader of the Senate, fiercely attacked multilateralism last week and said it undermined American sovereignty and encouraged isolationism, which he also opposes. Speaking at a conference in Washington, he said: "Subcontracting American foreign policy and subordinating American sovereignty encourage and strengthen isolationist forces at home and embolden our adversaries abroad."

Henry Kissinger, another critic of multilateralism, said at the same conference: "In the end America cannot derive its motivation from an international consensus. It has to develop its specific purposes and then try to shape an international consensus."

The Republican nationalists feel that the U.N. has sucked America into wars in which it has no interest, and cost American lives. President Bill Clinton, already playing to that mood in the middle of the Somalia catastrophe, in 1993, said: "If the American people are to say 'yes' to U.N. peacekeeping, the United Nations must know when to say 'no'."

That attempt to curb U.S. involvement in the U.N. has culminated in a Republican bill now before Congress called the National Security Revitalisation Bill. It stipulates that the U.S. must reclaim any expense incurred in peacekeeping operations even if they are not authorised by the U.N. Security Council. The Bill also stipulates that no U.S. soldier should serve under a foreign commander. If implemented, it would virtually end U.S. involvement in U.N. peacekeeping.

U.N. intervention peacekeeping would be crippled, because America is the only country capable of getting large numbers of well-armed troops rapidly to a distant war-zone. President Clinton is pledged to veto the Bill but, lacking a majority in Congress, he will have to comply with the mood that informs it.

Ms. Albright's justification for the U.N. has been accompanied by tough reforms of the organisation itself. In the past two years the Clinton administration has tamed the U.N. The General Assembly is less critical than ever before and the administration is being subjected to fierce changes. Budgets are being tightened and Washington has arbitrarily cut its contributions. President Clinton has

announced that the U.S. contribution to peacekeeping will be reduced to 25 per cent in October, cutting it without negotiation from 31 per cent. He is under pressure from Congress to cut it further to 20 per cent.

U.S. funding has always been a problem and for years Washington has been in arrears with its pledged payments. This year the U.S. is supposed to pay \$15m (£19.4m), a quarter of the U.N.'s peacekeeping budget, but who knows when the U.N. will get the cheque?

To those who would cut further, Ms. Albright says the U.N. serves U.S. foreign policy interests and that if it withdrew, the U.S. will have to do a great deal more by itself. It will either have to act alone or not at all.

Some observers see U.S. foreign policy going isolationist but in fact America has never been more involved in the rest of the world through trade, political power and influence.

The image of the U.N. painted by the new Republicans is 20 years out of date. They portray the U.N. as a forum of scoundrels and communists condemning the U.S. for imperialism and neo-colonialism and then expecting it to come to their rescue. These days such language is rarely heard but America's cold war habit of keeping tabs on which countries vote against it in the General Assembly continues. With no competing powers to rival U.S. hegemony, countries which cross it too often are simply removed from the aid list. U.S. diplomats make no secret of this and use it as a threat. Not many resolutions opposed by the U.S. are passed in the U.N.

Having fixed the General Assembly, the U.S. is working on U.N. bureaucracy. The image of foreign fat-cats living in New York off American taxpayers is even more emotive. Washington has therefore engineered the appointment of several key administrators at the U.N.

Joseph Connor, who used to head Peace Watchers in America, and Karl Theodore Paski, a former inspector-general of the German foreign service, have been up in charge of management and budgets. This year Mr. Connor submitted a budget below the projected one.

Another recent addition is John Hughes, formerly editor of the Christian Science Monitor and latterly on George Shultz's staff when he was secretary of state. Mr. Hughes is ostensibly employed to improve the U.N.'s image during its 50th birthday year but his title is Director of Communications and his job will be to get Boutros Ghali, the secretary general and other top officials on to U.S. television in ways which do not make them look negative or defensive. Mr. Hughes' Republican connections will also enable him to do some PR for the U.N. in Congress.

With a veto on the Security Council and a close ally in Britain, Washington can control peacekeeping operations, without much noise coming from a supine General Assembly. Meanwhile, key U.S.-approved appointments in the U.N. administration have strengthened it and made it more efficient. Once she has cut through the visceral nationalism of right-wing American politicians, Ms. Albright's task of selling the U.N. is easier than it looks.

The Independent

U.N. experts end Iraq mission

BAGHDAD (AFP) — United Nations experts ended a week-long mission to Baghdad Sunday to investigate Iraq's germ warfare programme, the only unresolved issue concerning Iraqi disarmament, a U.N. spokesman said. The mission came ahead of a visit by Rolf Ekens, head of the U.N. Special Commission on Disarming Iraq (UNSCOM), who is expected in Baghdad Friday. Nine biological weapons experts inspected five to six sites in Iraq to "investigate the past Iraqi programme," said Goran Wallen, head of the UNSCOM centre for long-term monitoring of Baghdad's weapons programmes. The Swedish general would not elaborate on the results of the mission, which was not revealed before Sunday. The team would present a report to Mr. Ekens, he said.

Man held near Ciller residence

ANKARA (AP) — A man carrying an unloaded pistol was arrested Sunday after trying to enter Prime Minister Tansu Ciller's residence. It was not clear whether the man intended to attack the premier, who was at home at the time. The suspect claimed he received a message from God while watching television that he wished to convey to Ms. Ciller, the Anatolia news agency reported. The dispatch said the man was carrying a membership card from the Islamist Welfare Party. Guards searched the suspect after he asked to see Ms. Ciller and found a 7.65-mm Barrett handgun that was not loaded, Anatolia added. The man's sister also was detained after being found near Ms. Ciller's residence. She said her brother was mentally disturbed, Anatolia said.

Bonn vows action after attack

BONN (R) — Bonn pledged on Sunday to crack down on foreigners who import their violent political struggles to Germany after firebombers attacked Turkish targets for the sixth consecutive night. No one claimed responsibility, but police suspect Kurdish militants, fighting Turkey since 1984 for an independent homeland, were behind the arson attacks. "The Kurds are acting in a way that we cannot accept," Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel told reporters during a meeting with his European Union colleagues in France. He said Germany should provide better protection for Turkish property, adding he expected Turkish leaders to raise the subject when he visits Ankara on Thursday.

Khomeini's grandson emerges

(Continued from page 12)

aware that he had acquired the title of hojatoleslam.

His height and presence along with fluent public speaking and a controlled manner have created a big impression over the past few days.

Iranians also say he has his father's voice and resembles his grandfather Ayatollah Khomeini at the same age.

Although Ahmad Khomeini had no official role in Iran, he was venerated as the "memory of the Ayatollah" and came to symbolise the spirit of his father's revolutionary brand of Islam.

2 Israelis killed

(Continued from page 1)

Other unexploded bombs were found on the ground around them.

Troops wound Palestinian

Israeli troops shot and wounded a Palestinian man during a clash in the south of the autonomous Gaza Strip Sunday, Palestinian police said.

Colonel Ribhi Arafat, head of the joint liaison committee in the south of the Strip, said troops jeered at a group of Palestinian teenagers returning from school, provoking angry protests near the Kissufim crossing point.

The troops then opened fire, wounding a 30-year-old Palestinian man in the leg. Soldiers also beat up a woman, the police official said. Both were taken to hospital.

Kohl to visit Jordan in June

(Continued from page 1)

dent Hafez Al Assad Germany would be able to offer support to the Syrian track of peace negotiations with Israel.

The German delegation also held talks at the Amman Chamber of Commerce and the Amman Chamber of Industry. They were briefed on investment opportunities and laws and regulations governing investment here.

Mr. Rau noted that it was the first time a large German economic delegation had come to the region. He said he expected big business and investment opportunities to arise from the Amman economic summit.

PLO agrees to continue self-rule talks

(Continued from page 1)

"the door to suspending the talks is still open."

The PLO reappointed Mahmoud Abbas, to head a committee to monitor negotiations with Israel.

Mr. Abbas was the PLO's principal negotiator and signatory of the declaration of principles but has since joined critics of the deal. He has also remained in Tunis since the self-authority was set up in Gaza last May.

PLO officials said the monitoring committee would take a tougher line on the talks with Israel.

Arafat spokesman Nabil Abu Rudeinah described the debate in Tunis as "very successful and positive."

"We agreed on many steps to be taken and the results

will emerge soon," he said of the two-day executive committee meeting.

"The negotiations covered all subjects. It was very tough and hard, but everyone accepted the final decision."

Israel and the PLO have now set July 1 as a target date for agreement on redeployment and elections.

Mr. Arafat returned to the Gaza Strip on Sunday.

Mr. Abbas meanwhile rejected the idea of phased withdrawal of Israeli troops from populated areas in the still-occupied West Bank, starting with Jenin and Bethlehem.

Mr. Abbas told Reuters: "Jenin-Bethlehem first is rejected because according to the accord redeployment can't be broken down. Any talk on Jenin-Bethlehem first

is a violation of the accord which we signed with Israel."

"And the principle of full redeployment from all Palestinian populated areas should not be raised or negotiated," Mr. Abbas said.

Mr. Abbas said he had yet to decide whether to accept the post of chief negotiator.

He said the 1993 accord dictated simultaneous withdrawal from all West Bank populated areas.

Further redeployment from the West Bank would be gradually implemented.

Mr. Abbas said that during the Tunis meetings, the issue of Jenin-Bethlehem first was debated in detail and rejected.

"The decision was that redeployment from populated areas cannot be broken down," he said.

U.S. groups urge rechanneling of aid

(Continued from page 1)

have been sent to every member of the U.S. Congress, all interested groups in the U.S. and all governments in the Middle East, Mr. Gubser said, adding that the next step was to follow it up through the media and other channels to convince those who matter of the validity and importance of the ideas therein.

According to the proposal, the \$5 billion aid should be used for projects whose outputs are shared among the various countries of the region.

The core of the argument behind the proposal is that the U.S. undertaking to help Israel and Egypt with economic and military assistance after they signed the Camp David accords was aimed at maintaining Middle East peace.

Now that the Arabs in general and Israel are engaged in peace negotiations and the Palestinians and Jordan have signed agreements with the Jewish state, Washington should rethink its priorities in the Middle East, its authors say.

"After reassessing U.S. aid to the Middle East in the context of the new global and regional realities, our study group concluded that the Camp David accords are no longer an adequate framework for effective U.S. aid to the region," says the authors of the proposal, mainly influential church groups and relief agencies.

The premises that constitute the framework for restructuring U.S. aid to the Middle East, according to the authors of the proposal, include promotion of peace and stability based on military reductions, sustainable economic development, respect for human rights and people's dignity, and greater popular participation in governance.

"Setting in motion a process of regional cooperation and integration is important both to consolidating the

peace process by promoting improved relationships among the peoples and governments of the area, and to finding effective solutions to the regional development problems," says the proposal.

The proposal suggests that the U.S. should reorient its thinking vis-a-vis aid to the Middle East and seek to ensure that assistance is directed towards "confidence-building measures...military reductions...sustainable development and open political systems...and regional cooperation and integration."

The most essential component in such reorientation is, says Mr. Gubser, increased American support for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that in the region rather than governments.

The NGOs the proposal mentions include peace groups, religious institutions, human rights groups, labour unions and professional organisations. The aid should facilitate "dialogue between diverse groups, with the objective of encouraging peoples in the region to live together in harmony and in mutually supportive communities."

Another component in the proposal is the removal of "tension-producing" factors through Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories, resettlement of refugees to mutually agreed locales, and moving Israeli settlers away from the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and the Golan Heights.

Mutual cooperation among the parties involved should be encouraged through new educational curricula for Israeli and Palestinian schools based on a "less stereotyped image of each people...and living-learning experiences such as Israeli/Palestinian camps for children."

The proposal calls for the world's major arms selling

nations to achieve "military reductions" in the region through a five-year ban on "sales and deliveries of major military equipment," and thus spare the people of the region the high cost of military equipment.

In particular it urges the U.S. administration to "encourage behind-the-scenes discussions in which countries identify the components of their neighbors' military forces that they find particularly threatening and then seek an agreement making mutual cuts."

The use of American aid should be oriented towards human development such as basic education, child survival activities, and primary health care and family planning, says the proposal.

Another area where the aid should focus on is institution building.

Last but not the least is the proposal's call for support for "initiatives to strengthen national economies and encourage regional-economic integration."

This would involve helping regional development institutions and infrastructure initiatives such as water resource development and management, electric power grids, highways, ports, and communications systems.

Attention and support would also be given to developing regional trading and labour exchange blocs and the protection of natural resources.

"We believe it is in the U.S. interest to contribute financially as well as diplomatically to a smooth transition to sustainable peace and development in the Middle East," says the 10-page proposal in conclusion. "Unfortunately, however, this opportunity arises at a time when U.S. foreign aid resources are growing scarcer. Significant amounts of new aid resources for those purposes are unlikely to be available."

"Restructuring of aid to the Middle East must become a policy priority..."



Rwandan refugee children share a splash in the Hong refugee camp in Zaïre. The war in Rwanda led to the displacement of thousands of children (AFP photo)

Rwandan village is still burying the past

By Sally Stapleton
The Associated Press

MAYUNZWE, Rwanda — Mayunzwe's survivors are still burying the past. Body by body, bone by bone.

With surgical gloves, white sheets and garden hoses, they gather torn, picked-at remains. Their work area is broad, a radius of about three kilometres around the village that became a killing zone last spring.

Evidence of the slaughter is easy to find: Shreds of clothing here, a shattered jawbone there, human hair hanging from branches in a tree.

Of the 250 people who lived in Mayunzwe, about 200 died when Rwanda's Hutu former government and civilian militias went on a killing spree last April.

An estimated 500,000 people were killed across the country.

The survivors, many returned from refugee camps outside Rwanda, are trying to put their lives back together, and give a decent burial to family and friends who were slaughtered.

Jeanne Uwiragye, 14, holds a white, wooden cross as her parents and three older brothers are lowered into a mass grave.

Jeanne and her grandmother could not afford wooden coffins, so her family is buried in sheets provided by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the new Tutsi-dominated government.

"It's very difficult," Jeanne says. "But all Rwandans have felt my pain."

It takes about an hour for the men to fill the grave, measuring some five yards by eight yards.

Nathalie Mukarurinda, a secretary in the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, was born and grew up in Mayunzwe. She organised a Roman Catholic funeral mass for the village's dead in late February.

"According to my faith, I believe their souls are still living, and I am doing my duty to pay respects," she says.

"Reconciliation is going to take a long time," she adds. "First, I have to know who killed my family. Then I have to know why. If someone came to me and said: 'I killed your family. Forgive me.' I would try. I have no hate in my heart for the people."

Life now is starting to return to normal in Rwanda's villages. Uniformed

children walk the dirt roads to school at dawn, through valleys immersed in fog. Villagers tend their plots of banana, coffee, avocado and papaya, cassava, maize and peanuts.

But beneath a peaceful surface, guilt and suspicion persist. The killings were often arbitrary, the killers forced many villagers to collaborate. Those who escaped them now wonder about one another: What did he do to stay alive? What deal did he make?

Adeodate Niyongana, 49, hid in the tall grass outside Mayunzwe while the massacre took place. "It's only God who helped me survive," he says. "I did nothing special."

Now he helps collect what is left of the dead.



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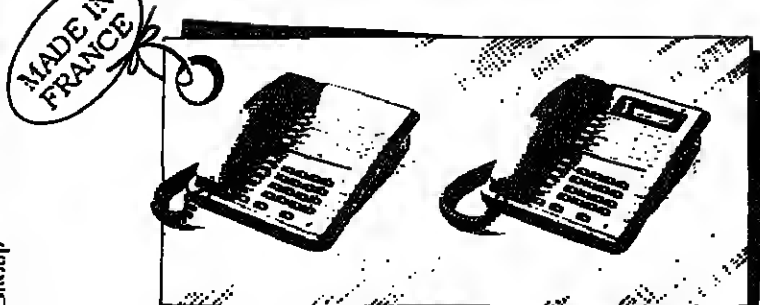
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49 In any way	9 Holiday time	YELTIN OIOKIL	51 Here to
50 Existence	10 Guard	YELTIN OIOKIL	52 Peace
51 Beyond reality	11 Hairy-haired	YELTIN OIOKIL	53 Sawducks
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54 Occurred	14 Feels	YELTIN OIOKIL	56 Swallow
55 Famous garden	15 Seamen	YELTIN OIOKIL	57 Swallow
56	16 Fido or Spots	YELTIN OIOKIL	58 Swallow
57 Its capital in	17	YELTIN OIOKIL	59 Swallow
58 Sena	18	YELTIN OIOKIL	60 Swallow
59 Serpents	19	YELTIN OIOKIL	61 Swallow
60	20	YELTIN OIOKIL	62 Swallow
DOWN	21	YELTIN OIOKIL	63 Swallow
1 Different	22	YELTIN OIOKIL	64 Swallow
2 Assembly hall of a	23	YELTIN OIOKIL	65 Swallow
3 School	24	YELTIN OIOKIL	66 Swallow
4 Guiding light	25	YELTIN OIOKIL	67 Swallow
	26	YELTIN OIOKIL	68 Swallow
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	92	YELTIN OIOKIL	134 Swallow
	93	YELTIN OIOKIL	135 Swallow
	94		

business daily beat
A review of economic news from the Arabic press

Taxi owners hope for 'gift from government'

The first part of this article was published on Sunday, March 19, '95

To highlight the benefit of replacement, the source explained that a 1980 taxi for example is likely to fetch JD 10,000. But the price is actually JD 2,000 for the car itself and JD 8,000 for the "taxi stamp" which will be put on the new car. As such, the taxi owner will only be giving away a car for JD 2,000. But, with a new car costing about JD 10,000 taxi owners stand to benefit for customers exemptions that would have been in the range of JD 15,000.

★ CAR DEALERS supported the views of the association and the taxi owners noting that the government should allow the transfer of public cars to private cars to give taxi owners a worthy package. The dealers pointed out that cars manufactured between 1980 and 1989 were still in good condition and that it is illogical to retire a 1989 car at a time of high need for transportation facilities.

Owners of old taxis said they would not mind giving guarantees to sell their old cars upon replacing them with new ones. They said that that would be "a gift from the government to the people," and would be a good step to make feel a real drop in the prices of used cars.

Majdi Al Nashashibi (Citroen dealer) agreed that service cabs had aged long ago and had become unsafe and unfit to stay on the roads, but he disagreed with those demanding that public cars be turned private "because of the availability of cheap and modern cars." Another car dealer, Rusdi Al Nobani, said he believed the new cars will be American and, as such, the public fleet of transport will be of one type. He described as catastrophic the condition that a taxi owner cannot resell his new car for ten or 20 years but it would be good and acceptable if there was a freedom to sell anytime. Mr. Nobani hoped the government would allow turning '85-'89 cars to the private category instead of scrapping them because "that will activate the car market and will serve the people by making available 'new' cars at very acceptable prices."

Ali Al Amareh, another car dealer, expressed doubt on the capability of taxi owners to replace their old cars due to the lack of cash. However, he hoped that '80-'89 cars be turned to the private category because it is better than scrapping them altogether.

Abdul Razzak Moheiddin hailed the government's plan for the modernisation "that will cleanse the street from all cars which do not reflect Jordan's modern image." He said if large numbers of cars are put in scrap yards and allowed to be used for spare parts, then "the market will be flooded with spares at practically no cost."

Hani Al Momani said the market was in a state of confusion with some people preferring not to sell and others preferring not to buy. He noted, however, that service cabs without the "stamp" would not be worth more than JD 2,500.

Taxi owner Ma'moun Al Abdalst said he cannot afford to replace his car with a new one. He added that 70 per cent of public cars were hypothecated for banks.

Arabs plan \$100 million tourism company

DAMASCUS (R) — The Union of Arab Banks (UAB) is planning to establish a company with an authorised capital of \$100 million to promote inter-Arab tourism, the UAB's chief was quoted on Sunday as saying.

Mahmoud Abdul Aziz told the official Syrian daily Tishreen the company would aim at improving tourist services and build hotels and other tourist projects in an effort to encourage Arabs to visit Arab rather than foreign countries.

He said Arab nationals were spending annually over \$40 billion on tourism in non-Arab states while their spending on tourism in Arab countries did not exceed \$3 billion.

"We believe we could double the three billion in one year if we work seriously to promote inter-Arab tourism," he said.

Mr. Abdul Aziz said his Beirut-based UAB will call a meeting within the next few weeks to announce the establishment of the company which will have a paid up capital of \$25 million.

He said Syrian Prime Minister Mahmoud Al Zu'bi expressed support to the idea while Lebanon, Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco showed big interest.

World arms suppliers vie for growing Mideast market

ABU DHABI (AFP) — More than 600 arms producers from around the world have flocked to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) for a major defence show, hoping to grab a share of the growing Middle East military market.

Some of them have already tried to lure potential buyers with offers of joint defence ventures in the region, extensive training and maintenance services for their clients.

While such dominant suppliers as the United States, France and Britain are competing to grab a larger slice of the cake, relative newcomers to the oil-rich Gulf like South Africa and Russia hope they will establish a foothold.

Both countries reported encouraging negotiations at the 1993 defence show in Abu Dhabi, where they exhibited sophisticated tanks and missiles.

Russian delegates said more contacts were held after the 1993 show for possible arms deals, while South Africa opened an office in Abu Dhabi last year to coordinate defence sales between its companies and the Gulf.

Both countries have already sold defence equipment to some Gulf nations but the deals were negligible compared with Western sales, military experts said.

The five-day ground and naval arms show, which opened Sunday, coincides with plans by the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states to beef up their armies following the shock 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

Experts said the GCC, a 14-year-old economic, political and defence alliance, would likely account for more than half the total defence expenditure of the 22-member Arab League in the next decade.

Defence spending is forecast at between \$60 and \$80 billion over the coming five years although the Arabs are heading for a comprehensive peace deal with Israel after decades of hostility including four major wars.

"The Middle East has become the fastest growing market in world military equipment," said Brigadier Sultan Al Suweidi of the UAE army, which is organising the show. "The defence exhibition in Abu Dhabi provides an ideal place for arms exporters and importers to discuss deals."

Sheikh Suweidi, speaking to reporters Saturday, said the UAE would announce new arms deals but did not give details or name the suppliers.

Military sources said the UAE had been negotiating

with some countries for the purchase of frigates as well as anti-submarine helicopters. U.S. Commerce Secretary Ron Brown, who visited the Emirates last month, said he was hopeful the United States would win the frigate deal.

France is again displaying its Leclerc battle tank, 436 of which have been ordered by the UAE under a multi-billion-dollar package announced at the 1993 show.

France is the UAE's biggest arms supplier and military sources said they expected more deals following

their recent defence pact. Giat Industries, which makes Leclerc tanks, has already embarked on plans to launch civilian projects jointly with the UAE private sector under an offset agreement.

Another French firm, Thomson-CSF, is also expected to announce the launching of a garment factory in line with an offset deal with the UAE.

Organisers said they had invited nearly 40,000 military delegates, including 50 defence ministers, for the show which includes helicopters, tanks, missiles, artillery, guns, frigates and a Dutch submarine.

They said new weapons would be exhibited for the first time in the Middle East.

Other participants in the exhibition, which complements an air show held in neighbouring Dubai every two years, including India, Ukraine, Indonesia, Australia, Canada, Romania, South Korea, Germany, Italy, China and Brazil.

Sheikh Suweidi said the exhibition and accompanying military conference provided a forum for military decision-makers in companies, armed forces and governments from around the world to meet, do business and exchange information.

Ministry, traders at odds over coffee

By Lola Kellani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Despite instability in coffee prices in the international market, the secretary-general of the Ministry of Supply, Mustafa Khleifat, says the ministry will keep prices within the present range of JD 4.40 to JD 5 per kilogramme.

Importers and traders on the other hand insist that the government should take its hands off the market and stay away from fixing prices since the fluctuations in the international market are too wide for anyone to determine a fixed price.

In July 1994, the Ministry of Supply decided to float the prices of coffee and leave it to market forces to determine the cost. But in August 1994, less than a month after the decision, international prices of the commodity went down and the government reimposed its controlled price.

"It was a managed flotation," said an official at the Ministry of Supply who asked not to be identified. "When the international prices of coffee dropped, and prices in Jordan did not,

the ministry made a gentleman's agreement with the importers to keep the prices at a ceiling of JD 4.40 per kilogramme for second grade coffee and JD 5 for first grade."

The ministry says local prices should not go beyond this range. But the commodity is trading in the market around JD 6 per kilogramme. One importer who denied the existence of the "gentleman's agreement" with the ministry, said:

"We do not comply with the ministry's prices. The public wants quality, and we cannot provide quality for JD 4.40 a kilo."

Within the Ministry of Supply itself, there is divided opinion on the issue.

"Coffee importers have the right to raise local prices if the international prices of coffee go up," said one official. But Mr. Khleifat insists that "prices should stay within the range."

"There is no need to worry about a price increase at the present," he said with confidence. Jordan imports 2,500 tonnes of coffee per year from 15 countries, but most comes from India, Uganda, Costa Rica, Brazil, and Ecuador.

Financial Markets

Foreign Exchange Market Summary (March 13 — March 17, 1995)

AMMAN — The dollar depreciated sharply against the mark and yen last week, while it depreciated modestly against sterling. It ended the week 2.02 per cent lower against the yen, 1.86 per cent lower against the mark and 0.64 per cent lower against sterling.

The U.S. unit declined against other major currencies Monday 13/3/1995, as traders reacted to a report in the New York Times Journal. The report indicated that the Federal Reserve Bank might not tighten its monetary policy in the short term as the economic activity is slowing down and inflationary rates are declining as well.

The dollar rose against other major currencies Tuesday, however. The dollar's rise came on the back of the mark's decline against other European currencies. The mark's weakness was attributed to dealers' expectations that the Bundesbank might lower the German interest rates on its next meeting, which was scheduled on Thursday 16/3/1995, to curb the pressures of a rising mark. Meanwhile, U.S. retail sales figures showed a decline of 0.5 per cent during February.

The dollar declined sharply against other major currencies Wednesday, as the mark reasserted its rise against other European currencies. The mark rose sharply against the Italian lire, the French franc, and the Spanish peseta as a result of political and economic problems. The dollar's weakness was also attributed to the U.S. financial market's decline. The U.S. financial markets declined on the release of a government report about factory conditions and the wholesale prices statistics causing investors to deduce that the U.S. economy is experiencing accelerating growth rate.

The dollar rose against other major currencies Thursday, however, on rumours that the Federal Reserve Bank, the Bank of Japan and the Bundesbank might coordinate a joint intervention to prop the U.S. unit.

On Friday, the dollar depreciated sharply against the mark and the yen while rising marginally against sterling. Reports indicated that the mark continued its rise against other European currencies as investors sought the mark as safe-haven currency. Flow of funds from the U.S. unit to the mark and the yen also contributed to the dollar's weakness.

New York Closing Rates for Major Currencies Against the U.S. Dollar

Currency	10/3/95	17/3/95	Percent Change
Sterling Pound	1.5740	1.5840	0.64%
Deutsche Mark	1.4125	1.3867	1.86%
Swiss Franc	1.1797	1.1505	2.54%
French Franc	5.0455	4.9593	1.74%
Japanese Yen	90.90	89.10	2.02%

USD Per STU

Euro-Currency Interest Rates

Currency	10/3/1995	17/3/1995
U.S. Dollar	6.00	6.68
Sterling Pound	6.34	7.75
Deutsche Mark	4.81	5.43
Swiss Franc	3.50	4.19
French Franc	8.12	7.50
Japanese Yen	2.18	2.37

Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin

Date: 19/3/1995

Currency	Bid	Offer
U.S. Dollar	0.6660	0.6660
Sterling Pound	1.0865	1.0917
Deutsche Mark	0.4935	0.4960
Swiss Franc	0.5957	0.5987
French Franc	0.1382	0.1389
Japanese Yen	0.7680	0.7727
Dutch Guilder	0.4391	0.4415
Swedish Krona	0.0391	0.0395
Italian Lira	0.0391	0.0395
Belgian Franc	0.0391	0.0395

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET			
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ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SUNDAY 19/03/1995			
COMPANY'S NAME	NO. OF SHARES TRADED	VALUE TRADED JD	PRICE
ARAB BANK P.C.	520	97597	187.500
JORDAN NATIONAL BANK	4750	20828	4.420
JORDAN POSTAL BANK / NEW	100	425	4.250
MIDDLE EAST INVESTMENT BANK	1800	2487	1.410
THE HOUSING BANK	750	4515	6.020
JORDAN KIWAT BANK	11944	34636	2.910
JORDAN GULF BANK	16450	20446	1.230
JORDAN ISLAMIC BANK	9543	38880	3.760
JORDAN INVESTMENT & FINANCE BANK	300	1089	3.780
REIT KHALAF SAVINGS INVESTMENT FOR HOUSING	150	480	3.000
AMMAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	13735	14844	1.090
PHILADELPHIA INVESTMENT BANK	1550	1941	1.270
SANKS SECTOR	61742	235669	INDEX NUMBER: 158.50
JORDAN FRENCH INSURANCE	10250	25580	2.500
HOLY LAND INSURANCE	1049	2725	2.550
INSURANCE SECTOR	11299	28305	INDEX NUMBER: 136.33
JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER	12129	18920	1.560
JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER / NEW	3750	5550	1.490
ARAB INTERNATIONAL HOTELS	7180	35897	5.000
JORDAN NATIONAL SHIPPING LINES	4937	15118	3.080
JORDAN PRESS FOUNDATION / AL-KHAYMA	3108	34875	11.250
ARAB INTER. FOR INVESTMENT & EDUCATION	3850	13206	3.480
SERVICES SECTOR	34946	123565	INDEX NUMBER: 127.65
JORDAN TOBACCO & CIGARETTES	154	4004	27.000
REFINERY CORP. MATERIAL MANUFACTURING	500	540	1.100
THE JORDAN CEMENT FACTORIES	9025	26035	2.980
THE ARAB POTASH/NEW	650	3055	4.810
JORDAN PETROLEUM REFINERY	420	3888	9.280
THE INDUSTRIAL COMMERCIAL & AGRICULTURAL	100	350	3.510
THE JORDAN WORTED KILLS	7250	53650	7.400
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL MANUFACTURING	4178	17087	4.170
JORDAN CERAMIC INDUSTRIES	511	3019	5.950
THE JORDAN PIPES MANUFACTURING	1600	4320	2.710
JORDAN PAPER & CARBONADO FACTORIES	1250	4000	4.000
SPINNING & WEAVING	2750	6885	2.510
RAPIA INDUSTRIES	11850	32114	2.770
DAR AL DANA DEVELOPMENT & INVESTMENT	4976	38469	7.800
ARAB INVESTMENT & INTERNATIONAL TRADE	3750	3195	8.700
ARAB ALUMINUM INDUSTRY	2750	47165	6.400
LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	33800	21920	0.670
JORDAN PAPER CONVERTING & TRADING	1700	2385	1.430
REYNOLDS STEEL INDUSTRY	800	2727	3.450
INTERMEDIAN PAPER & CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES	250	250	1.000
JORDAN INDUSTRIES & MATCH/JINCO	450	297	0.670
JORDAN SULPHUR-CHEMICALS	300	421	1.400
ARAB CENTER FOR PHARM. & CHEMICALS	21500	4813	2.280
KAWTHAR INVESTMENT	250	408	1.650
UNIVERSAL MODERN INDUSTRIES	11000	41491	3.930
JORDAN INDUSTRIAL RESOURCES CO.	4950	9934	2.000
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR	107265	303775	INDEX NUMBER: 118.93
CRANO TOTAL	215252	691314	INDEX NUMBER: 140.01
NO. OF TRADED SHARES IN PARALLEL MARKET	109791		
VALUE TRADED IN PARALLEL MARKET	121161		

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Michael Jordan returns to Bulls lineup

CHICAGO (AFP) — Michael Jordan said it all with two words: "I'm back."

No one, not his once and future National Basketball Association (NBA) team the Chicago Bulls, not his NBA rivals, and certainly not millions of fans across the country, doubt he will again dominate the sport he left less than two years ago.

"He walked in this morning, shook my hand and said, 'It's a done deal,'" Bulls coach Phil Jackson said Saturday.

Jordan will rejoin the team he led to three NBA titles for the game against the Indiana Pacers in Indianapolis.

"I think after having him on the floor tomorrow, I'll be able to describe it...maybe I won't be able to describe it," Jackson said. "But once we see him out there in that red uniform playing for the Chicago Bulls, that'll be the emotional moment we've looked for and we've all waited for."

The Bulls put rookie Dickie Simpkins on the injured list to make room for Jordan on the 12-man roster, but Jackson said he did not know yet how many minutes Jordan would play against the Pacers.

"He knows he's going to be tired in this kind of contest, where he hasn't played a 48-minute game," Jackson said. "The only way he can prepare for it is game conditioning. So we'll try to save him for six, seven-minute bursts to start with and see how his conditioning is right away."

Jordan is in shape from his abbreviated baseball career. He shocked the basketball

Highlights of Michael Jordan's career

★ Member of University of North Carolina national championship team in 1982.
★ Chicago Bulls Number One draft choice in 1984 and National Basketball Association Rookie of the Year 1984-85.

★ Member of United States gold medal-winning Olympic teams in 1984 and 1992.
★ Led Bulls to three straight NBA Championships, in 1991, 1992 and 1993.

★ Won three NBA regular season Most Valuable Player awards: in 1988, 1991 and 1992.

★ Won three consecutive NBA finals MVPs in 1991-93.
★ Won seven consecutive NBA scoring titles from 1987-93.

★ Named NBA All-Star Game MVP in 1988.

★ Bulls' all-time leading scorer and NBA 15th all-time leading scorer with 21,541 points.

★ Scored career-best 69 points against Cleveland on

March 28, 1990.

★ Scored a playoff-record 63 points in a 1986 first-round game against Boston.

★ Has scored 50 or more points 34 times.

★ Set an NBA record with 23 consecutive points against Atlanta in 1987.

★ Holds career record for highest-points per game average in regular season at 32.3.

★ Holds career record for highest-points per game average in playoffs, 34.6.

★ In 1989 he tied single-game record for most free throws made in one quarter, 14, against Utah.

★ Retired from the NBA on October 6, 1993.

★ Banned 202 in a five month spell with the Birmingham Barons minor league baseball team in 1994.

★ Announced his retirement from baseball because of obstacles posed by the major league players' strike on March 10, 1994.

★ Announced his return to the NBA on March 18, 1995.

Jordan is still on the club's payroll under a contract that runs until next year.

It was not clear if the Bulls, owned by Jerry Reinsdorf, could negotiate to change or extend Jordan's contract, since clubs are banned from bargaining with players until a new collective bargaining agreement is in place.

Jordan finally put a stop to the questions with his terse statement, issued through his agent: "I'm back."

The Bulls followed up with another ironically low-key announcement.

"Michael Jordan today informed the Chicago Bulls

world when he retired on October 6, 1993, only 30 years old and still at his peak.

Once retired he turned to baseball, trying to live out a boyhood dream of playing major league ball. But the turmoil caused by the players' strike put paid to that two weeks ago.

Ever since Jordan quit baseball and returned to Chicago, the rumour mill has been grinding.

When he turned up to practice with the Bulls last week, speculation that he

would "unretire" reached fever pitch.

Jordan finally put a stop to the questions with his terse statement, issued through his agent: "I'm back."

The Bulls followed up with another ironically low-key announcement.

"Michael Jordan today informed the Chicago Bulls



Chicago Bulls coach Phil Jackson talks to the press after the return of basketball star Michael Jordan to the team (AFP photo)

that he is ending his retirement from professional basketball," the statement said. "He will make his return to the Bulls lineup tomorrow when the Bulls face the Indiana Pacers."

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It was not clear if the Bulls, owned by Jerry Reinsdorf, could negotiate to change or extend Jordan's contract, since clubs are banned from bargaining with players until a new collective bargaining agreement is in place.

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"Michael Jordan today informed the Chicago Bulls

"Obviously, he's talked with Jerry," the Bulls source said. "But what they've talked about is anybody's guess."

When Jordan left the NBA, he said: "I just feel I don't have anything else to prove."

With all the hype surrounding his return, he will now be expected to prove even more.

"I feel a little sorry for him," said backup Bulls guard Steve Kerr. "I wouldn't want all that pressure. All the blame and glory

will be on his shoulders."

Three players remain from the Bulls of Jordan's days, forward Scottie Pippen, guard B.J. Armstrong and centre Will Perdue.

Center Bill Wennington said he and other recent arrivals were looking forward to playing with Jordan.

"A lot of us are excited," he said. "It'll be neat. There will be some adjustments, but Michael is talented and he already knows the offense. He brings everyone's level up."

For the 126th-ranked Joyce, the victory over Stich is his biggest success to date. Saturday's win marks his first triumph over a player ranked in the top 10 and the first time in his career he's won two matches at one tour event.

"I am actually surprised it was pretty easy," said a jubilant Joyce. "He didn't play so well, and I played really well. I surprised myself. I might win (at the end of the second set). Right now, it is kind of shocking."

Joyce did his homework prior to the match, asking fellow pros for a scouting report on Stich.

"He looks as beatable as ever," Rostagno half-joked about Sampras, knowing that he's beaten the world's top-ranked player both times they've played.

Stich, the 1991 Wimbledon champion and former second-ranked player in the world, admitted to not offering the fans an acceptable sampling of his talents.

"It was physical and mental," Stich said. "I had a little problem with my back. It was very sore. I couldn't really serve the way I wanted to and

the last 19 months curing a persistent elbow problem and working for a college degree."

Rostagno's second-round opponent, top-seeded Pete Sampras, is likely to be more of a handful for the returning American to conquer.

Other second-round victors on Saturday were third-seeded Jana Novotna of the Czech Republic, who defeated countrywoman Petra Langrova 6-2, 6-0 seventh-seeded Jim Courier of the U.S. beat Jean-Philippe Fleurbaert of France 6-3, 6-4 and 10th-seeded Andrei Medvedev of the Ukraine beat Lionel Roux of France 6-4, 6-1, (1-7) 6-3.

In an interesting first-round match, American Derrick Rostagno, playing in his first tournament since the 1993 U.S. Open, won a hard fought 6-4, 3-6, 6-2 battle over Mark Petchey of Britain.

Rostagno spent much of

Stich loses, Graf wins in second round

KEY BISCAINE (R) — It was a good day and a bad day for high profile German players at the \$4.1 million Lipton Championships on Saturday as second-seeded Steffi Graf won, but fifth-seeded Michael Stich flopped.

The confident defending champion and second-ranked Graf dominated American Ginger Helgeson Nielsen 6-2, 6-3 in a 71-minute second-round match.

In contrast, the eighth-ranked Stich put in less than his best effort in a second-round loss to American Michael Joyce 6-3, 6-2 in 61 minutes.

All the seeded players in the Lipton Championships received first round byes.

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Rostagno spent much of

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Qatar likely to stage Youth Soccer Championships

DOHA (AP) — Qatar has emerged as the likely venue for this year's World Youth Soccer Championship after Nigeria was prevented from staging the competition by the World Soccer Federation, sources said Sunday.

A four-man delegation from the Switzerland headquarters of the federation, known by its French initials FIFA, flew to Doha Saturday to inspect the facilities.

Although local soccer officials refused to discuss the plans on the record, sources said FIFA is expected to ratify the choice of Qatar early next week.

A source at the Qatar Football Association said they were "very optimistic" the two-week tournament could start on April 13.

Nigeria had the under-19 competition between 16 teams taken away because of fears over health and security arrangements in the West African country.

The Qatar authorities say they are confident they have both the facilities and experience to stage the tournament on such short notice.

The country's major international stadium has a 50,000-seat capacity. There are four other grounds in the capital which can accommodate 20,000 spectators.

In 1993, Qatar hosted the Asian qualifying round of the World Cup, which included an explosive mixture of teams like Iraq, Iran, North and South Korea. The tournament passed without major incident.

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Sameh Madani
Managing Director

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Shearer fires Blackburn six points clear

LONDON (AFP) — Blackburn Rovers went six points clear at the top of the English Premiership Saturday with a 2-1 victory over Chelsea which brought the Londoners down to earth with a bump.

Chelsea's stirring midweek victory over FC Brugge took them into the semi-finals of the European Cup Winners Cup, and their sky-high morale even earned them a 1-0 lead over Rovers on Saturday.

But Blackburn's England striker Alan Shearer cancelled out Mark Stein's third-minute header with his 100th league goal and captain Tim Sherwood added the second in the 36th.

Shearer said: "It was an important win and it's great to be in this position after losing life at the bottom with Southampton."

"Obviously it's nice to achieve the milestone. Graeme Le Saux set up the chance for me on a plate."

While Shearer was typically modest about his achievement, Chelsea manager Glenn Hoddle paid tribute to the all-round qualities of England's most dangerous centre-forward.

"Shearer has strength in the air, strength on the ball and pace. He has self-belief but he hasn't got an ego. He works hard for the team," said Hoddle.

Chelsea were weakened by an injury crisis that has deprived them of 11 squad players and four first-team regulars, including inspirational midfielder Dennis Wise.

Wise has a thigh injury but that may turn out to be the least of his worries if he fails in his appeal against the three-month jail sentence he received after being convicted on Monday of assaulting a taxi driver last October.

Blackburn's impressive lead may only last 24 hours as second-placed Manchester United, who play Liverpool at Anfield on Sunday, continue their bid for a third consecutive Premiership title.

Dutch playmaker Bryan Roy engineered a 3-0 win for Nottingham Forest against Southampton, whose manager Alan Ball decided to keep his front-page goalkeeper Bruce Grobbelaar on the substitutes' bench.

Roy opened the scoring after 38 minutes, Stan Colly-

more rattled home the second from 10 yards and the Dutchman natched his second in the 81st minute with a glorious volley past David Beasant in the Saints' goal.

Grobelaar, along with Wimbledon's Hans Segers and Aston Villa's John Fashanu, were among five people released from custody on Wednesday pending further inquiries by Hampshire police into alleged match-rigging.

All three have been cleared by the Football Association to continue playing for their clubs as the investigation into a corruption network involving Far East betting syndicates continues.

Saints boss Alan Ball said that he had omitted Grobbelaar because he did not want to expose him to further pressure.

Ball said: "I decided to leave Bruce out on the way up on the coach yesterday. You wouldn't treat a dog the way he's been treated this week and, strong and resilient as he is, I didn't want to subject him to a game."

"He would have played without a shadow of a doubt because he is that type of person. But I took the decision for him because I thought it was right and he understands because he's a good professional and a good person."

Leeds United did their bid for a place in next season's UEFA Cup a power of good, beating Coventry 3-0 at Elland Road.

Anthony Yeboah scored his fifth goal in the last three games to put Leeds 1-0 up and an own-goal by Coventry keeper Jonathan Gould and a cracker from Rod Wallace put the result beyond doubt.

Jürgen Klinsmann got the 82nd minute winner for Spurs in their 1-0 victory over bottom club Leicester City, while fellow German Uwe Rosler was a similar hero for Manchester City at Maine Road.

Gay Whittingham and Graham Hyde put Wednesday in the driving seat with goals in the first 20 minutes, but Rosler pulled one back for City with his 17th goal of the season.

Paul Walsh got the equaliser for the home side before Rosler struck again with a

fine 15-yard winner on 85 minutes.

England striker Les Ferdinand put Queens Park Rangers 1-0 up over Everton with his 20th goal of the season, but the Merseysiders responded with more proof of their re-discovered fighting spirit.

Stuart Barlow bagged a first equaliser, before Ferdinand knocked the ball down for Stephen Galloway to put Rangers 2-1 up, only for an own goal by Alan McDonald to make it all square.

A point each seemed certain until the final seconds, when Everton were awarded a free-kick 25 yards out. Andy Hinchcliffe stepped up and his bullet drive rattled into the back of the net for a dramatic 2-2 victory.

Wimbledon hardman Vinnie Jones got on the scoresheet against Crystal Palace in their south London derby and Marcus Gayle made it 2-0 to shut Palace deeper into the relegation zone.

John Moncur and Don Hutchison gave relegation strugglers West Ham a much-needed boost with a goal apiece in their 2-0 win at Aston Villa, who are also far from comfortable in the bottom half of the table.

No stopping Paris St. Germain

French champions Paris St. Germain reached their second semi-final in three days on Saturday, when they beat Nancy 2-0 in the last eight of the French Cup.

After trouncing Johan Cruyff's Barcelona on Wednesday night in the European Champions Cup quarter-finals, PSG, even with key first team members rested, were not going to be stopped by a second division French club — despite the flooded pitch.

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Swiss Schneider snatches World Cup title

BORMIO, Italy (R) — Vreni Schneider produced a stunning second run to win the slalom at the Alpine Skiing World Cup finals Sunday and retain her overall World Cup title, beating German Katja Seizinger by just six points.

Triple Olympic champion Schneider, down in fourth place after the first leg, was the quickest on the second run by almost a second to leap into top spot.

That left speed specialist Seizinger needing to pull up from 18th to a top 10 finish to take the overall title for the first time.

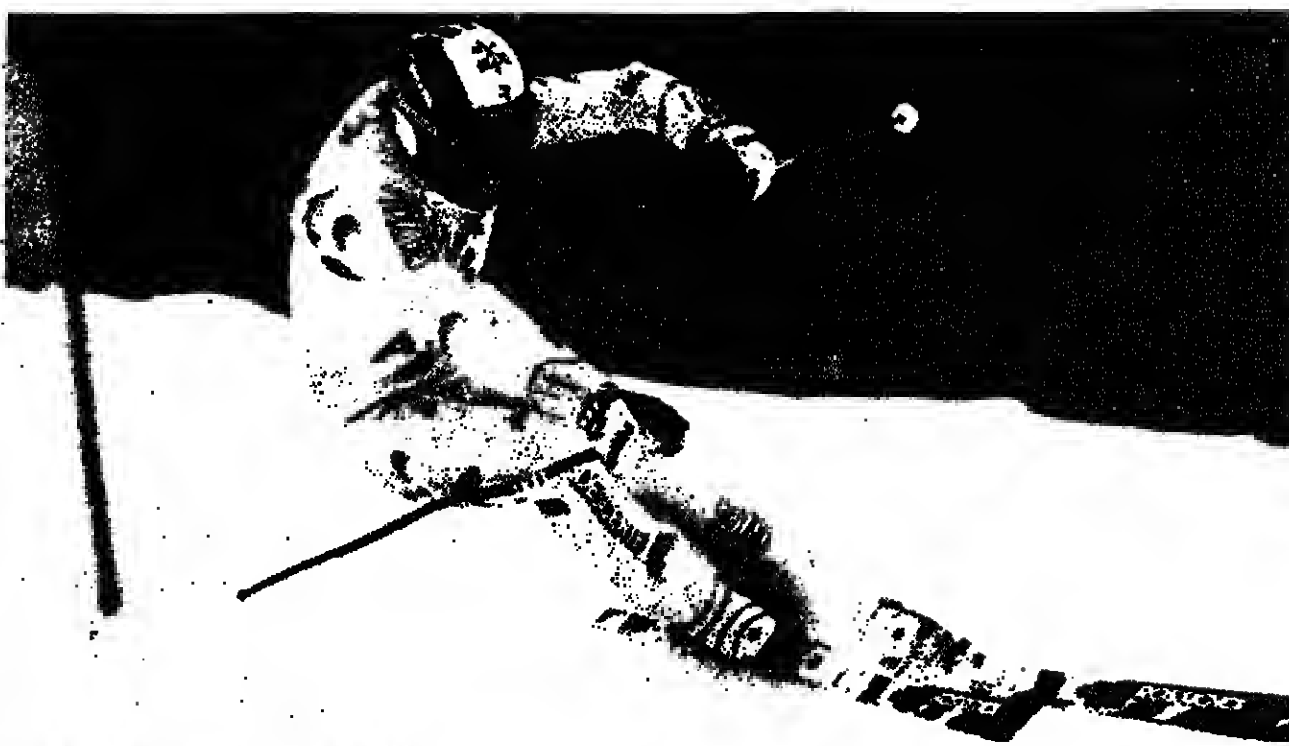
She produced a fine charging run to move into 14th but that was not enough to prevent Swiss Schneider taking the overall title for the third time. She won in 1989 and 1994.

Schneider finished with 1,248 World Cup points while Seizinger ended agonisingly short on 1,242, the fourth successive year she has been deprived of the last.

It was the third World Cup trophy of the season for Schneider, also champion in the giant slalom and slalom. Alberto Tomba managed an identical hat-trick in the men's events.

Sweden's Pernilla Wiberg was second behind Schneider in the slalom final with Urska Horvat of Slovenia taking third.

Schneider and Seizinger embraced at the finishing line after the race, showing there



Vreni Schneider speeds down the slope

were no hard feelings.

It was Schneider's fourth win of the season and the 55th of a great career. Austrian Annemarie Moser-Proell is the only woman to better that tally with 62.

There was disappointment for the thousands of Italian fans lining the course and packing the finish area when their hero Tomba proved he is mortal by straddling the second gate in the first leg of the men's slalom final.

The error denied Tomba

the chance to add to his 11 wins in a marvellous season. "I only raced today for all these great fans. I'll watch the second leg from down here at the finish with them," Tomba said after his mistake.

Norwegian nile Christian Furuseth took advantage of Tomba's absence to record his first win in the discipline since 1990. It was the first victory this season for Norway, suffering from a post-Olympic hangover.

World Cup winners in 1994/95 season

Overall:	Men
Slalom:	Alberto Tomba (Italy)
Giant Slalom:	Tomba
Downhill:	Lac Alphonse (France)
Super-G:	Peter Runggaldier (Italy)
Overall:	Women
Slalom:	Vreni Schneider (Switzerland)
Giant Slalom:	Schneider
Downhill:	Picabo Street (U.S.)
Super-G:	Katja Seizinger (Germany)

Free throw gives Knicks 92-91 overtime win

NEW YORK (AP) — Derek Harper's free throw with 5.6 seconds to play in overtime snapped a tie and Chris Morris' 23-footer (7 metres) at the buzzer missed the rim entirely as New York edged New Jersey 92-91.

John Starks hit 6-of-14 3-pointers and scored 25 points to lead New York, which let a 15-point lead with three minutes remaining in the third quarter slip away.

Supersonics 133, Pistons 116: Hitting a club-record 14 3-pointers, the Seattle Supersonics defeated the Detroit Pistons 133-116 before a sell-out crowd of 17,326 in the Tacoma Dome Saturday in Tacoma, Washington.

Detlef Schrempf, the NBA's top 3-point shooter, led the Sonics' 3-point barrage with 4-for-4 shooting from outside the circle. Schrempf and Gary Payton each finished with 25 points.

Hawks 122, Suns 117: At Atlanta, Steve Smith scored a career-high 37 points and Mookie Blaylock had 27 as Atlanta survived a late

Phoenix rally and snapped the Suns' four-game road winning streak.

The Hawks saw a 106-89 lead with 7:45 remaining dwindle to 115-110 on a dunk by Charles Barkley with 2:42 to play. But the Suns never got closer until the final 13 seconds when a Richard Dumas dunk cut it to 119-115.

Spurs 116, Mavericks 106: At San Antonio, David Robinson had 36 points and 13 rebounds as San Antonio treated the largest crowd in the NBA this season to a victory.

A crowd of 35,888 watched as Sean Elliott added 29 points and Vinnie Del Negro 20 for the Spurs, who beat the Mavericks for the first time in three games at the Alamodome this season. It was San Antonio's third straight victory overall.

Nuggets 110, Trailblazers 90: At Denver, Mahmoud Abdul Rauf and Rodney Rogers scored 17 points each as Denver defeated cold-shooting Portland.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TANWAH MERSCH
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PLAY THE RIGHT HONOR

Both vulnerable. South deals.

NORTH
♠ 7 5 3
♥ 6 2
♦ K J 7 5 4 2
♣ 8 5

WEST
♠ 9 6 4 2
♥ J 10 9 8 4
♦ A 10 9 8
♣ A 7 6 5

EAST
♠ Q J 10 9
♥ 7 5 3
♦ A 10 9 8
♣ K 2

SOUTH
♠ A K
♥ A K Q
♦ Q 8 7
♣ Q J 10 9 4

The bidding:
South West North East
1 NT Pass 3 NT Pass
Pass Pass

Opening lead: Jack of ♠

It might seem that, with a com-

bined holding of K Q J in a suit, it makes little difference how these cards should be played. If you believe that, consider this hand.

South's hand is a typical two no trump opening bid and the only question is whether North should raise to game or pass—there are too many losers to contemplate an 11-trick contract in the minor suit.

Since the diamond suit could be a source of tricks, we are sure our readers choose the raise.

Declarer won the opening lead in hand and, since establishing clubs would yield only eight tricks, immediately went after diamonds by leading low to the jack. East won the ace and West's heart discard was a shock. The defender shifted to the queen of spades. The only way to

land the contract now was to score two club tricks, but the defenders were a tempo ahead and collected two spade tricks, two club tricks and the ace of diamonds before declarer could take nine.

Suppose that, instead of a low diamond, declarer were to lead the queen at trick two. If East ducks, declarer is a trick ahead in the game. By immediately shifting the attack to clubs, declarer counts to nine tricks before the defenders can get one of their suits free. But grabbing the ace of diamonds does not help, either. Declarer simply wins any return, ducks a diamond and now has nine tricks in the bank via two aces, three hearts and four diamonds.

Some cards are simply more equal than others.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Perry shows photos of Iraq to Saudis

RIYADH (R) — U.S. Defence Secretary William Perry on Sunday showed satellite photographs to Saudi defence leaders of what he termed Iraq's military build-up and said Riyadh agreed that Gulf states should increase their own military preparedness. Mr. Perry said the photographs showed Iraq had rebuilt facilities like artillery production plants, chemical warfare and rocket engine plants which had been destroyed in the 1991 Gulf war. "I think it's clear that the Saudis concur in our assessment of the build-up in Iraq — the continuing threat from Iraq — and the necessity for having a unified coalition military capability for dealing with that," Mr. Perry said. He was speaking to reporters en route to Riyadh from a meeting with Saudi Defence Minister Prince Sultan in the northern Arabian desert. "What I showed him was a set of satellite imagery that was taken in the spring of 1991 and then the same scene taken last month," Mr. Perry said.

Khalili takes over control of Afghan faction

ISLAMABAD (AFP) — The Afghan Shiite faction Hezbe-Wahdat has appointed Karim Khalili as its interim president following the killing of Abdul Ali Mazari last week, a party official said here Sunday. Mr. Khalili, who was appointed Friday, will fill in the position until the party's central executive committee elects a new president. Wahdat political affairs chief Mohammad Rasul Talib told AFP. He said the committee would meet somewhere in Afghanistan soon after the burial of Mazari in the northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif on Thursday or Friday.

Hijackers want asylum in Sweden

KHARTOUM (R) — Five armed Ethiopian hijackers surrendered to Sudanese authorities after it was agreed the Swedish embassy in Khartoum would be contacted about their wish to go to Sweden, the Sudan News Agency Sana said on Sunday. The Ethiopian Airlines Boeing 737, carrying 92 people on a domestic flight, was hijacked on Friday and landed at Al Obeid airport in central Sudan after the hijackers first demanded to be taken to Sweden. The hijacking ended peacefully on Saturday and the hijackers are now being held by the Sudanese authorities.

Four die in helicopter crash in Djibouti

DJIBOUTI (R) — All four people aboard a Russian-built Mi-2 military helicopter of the Djibouti army died when it crashed on Saturday in a mountainous area in the north of the country, an official statement said on Sunday. Search parties found the wreckage on Sunday north of the town of Tadjourah, an area where guerrillas fought the Djibouti government for three years before signing a peace agreement last December. The cause of the crash was not known.

Palestinian police chief goes to Britain

GAZA CITY (AFP) — Palestinian police chief Nasr Yousef left Gaza City on Sunday for a familiarisation mission to Britain, officials said. Prime Minister John Major invited Brigadier General Yousef to visit police facilities in London when he went to Gaza City last week. Gen. Yousef was to fly via Amman and spend several days in the British capital. Britain is one of the main donors to the Palestinian police forces and Mr. Major handed over 50 patrol vehicles when he met Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat last Tuesday.

Fakes among 'masterpieces' seized in Israel

TEL AVIV (AFP) — At least two of 14 stolen works of art attributed to 20th century masters and seized from a Frenchman in Israel are fakes, police admitted Sunday. "Two or three are not genuine," police spokesman Eric Bar Chen told AFP. But he would not reveal which of the paintings first announced to be by Degas, Matisse, Modigliani, Picasso, Van Gogh and other less celebrated artists were fake. "Museum experts are continuing to examine the paintings," Bar Chen said. Marc Sibbon, 53, a tourist from France, was remained in custody for 10 days from Friday while inquiries continue into the theft of the art from a Paris dealers' home on Feb. 21. Mr. Sibbon's suspected accomplice, Muriel Ben Harush, 48, of Tel Aviv, was put under house arrest for 15 days on bail of \$18,000.

Israeli, U.S. troops in evacuation exercise

HAIFA (R) — American and Israeli soldiers simulated the evacuation to an Israeli hospital of U.S. troops on Sunday, military officials said. Two U.S. military helicopters transported American soldiers pretending to be wounded to Haifa's Rambam hospital. Israeli army doctors and medics "treated" them at the helipad before carrying them on stretchers to the hospital emergency room. "In the context of the ongoing cooperation between the two countries, U.S. theatre casualties could be treated in Israeli hospitals by Israeli physicians and medical personnel," an Israeli army spokesman said in explanation of the drill.

Iraq reopens bridge bombed in Gulf war

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq reopened Sunday a bridge over the River Tigris in Baghdad which was destroyed by allied warplanes during the 1991 Gulf war. Hussein Kamal Hassan, minister for industry and minerals, praised the Iraqis' ability to "count on themselves" to rebuild their country despite U.N. trade sanctions as he inaugurated the 336-metre long suspension bridge. The 14th of July bridge, named after the day of the creation of Iraq's republic in 1958, collapsed on Feb. 9, 1991, under aerial Iraq's seven-month occupation of Kuwait. Mr. Hassan said two new bridges would be built over the Tigris as well as a tunnel underneath the river. Three bridges out of the dozen in Baghdad were damaged in the Gulf war. The bridges of Al Jumhuriyah and Al Shuhada have already been repaired.

German foreign minister to visit Egypt

CAIRO (AFP) — German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel is to begin a two-day visit to Cairo on Monday for talks on Europe's role in the Middle East peace process and bilateral ties, the Egyptian Foreign Ministry said. Mr. Kinkel will meet his Egyptian counterpart Amr Musa on Monday and President Hosni Mubarak on Tuesday, the ministry said. He would "discuss developments in the Middle East situation, obstacles to the establishment of a just and comprehensive peace and the role that Germany and the European Union can play to advance the peace process," it said. Last Wednesday Kinkel met Crown Prince Hassan and Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres in Bonn and assured them of German and EU support for development projects in the Middle East. He said the EU would carry out a feasibility study of two major water projects in Israel and Jordan.

Kuwait talks fail to resolve strike

KUWAIT (R) — Striking Kuwaiti oil workers trying to stop production and exports said their meeting with Oil Minister Abdul Momen Al Mudej on Sunday failed to resolve the dispute. "The result of the talks is negative," Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) Labour Union General Secretary Anwar Al Balhan told Reuters after Mr. Mudej met the union chairman, Mohammed Al Sarhan. Oil Ministry officials were not immediately available for comment. The talks at the minister's office were the first between Mr. Mudej and the union since hundreds of KOC production and export workers walked out on Saturday to halt Kuwait's three per cent share of global output.

Arab League is not dead — Abdul Meguid

CAIRO (R) — Arab League Secretary-General Esmat Abdul Meguid said on Sunday the organisation remained paralysed by the 1990 Gulf crisis but it would never die because it personified Arab identity and culture.

In an interview with Reuters days before marking the 50th anniversary of the 22-member organisation, Dr. Abdul Meguid said the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait was the "most serious setback that the Arab countries had received" since the league was established.

He said continuing Arab differences prevented an Arab summit from taking place as part of the 50th anniversary celebrations. The last Arab summit was in August 1990 to try to find an Arab solution for the Gulf crisis.

"We welcome an Arab summit, but I don't think an enlarged Arab summit is possible now for the actual inter-Arab differences that are still existing as a result of the Gulf crisis," he said.

Nearly five years after the Gulf crisis, he said, "the attitude is not yet settled and we certainly need more time."

After the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, many Arab countries, especially the rich Gulf states, stopped paying their dues, pushing the league into financial crisis and forcing it to close several offices abroad. Employees have not been receiving their pay and delays have lasted for months (see page 2).

Responding to criticism, including that of Arab diplomats, that the Arab League is dead, Dr. Abdul Meguid answered angrily:

"The diplomat who said so must be dead himself and not the Arab League. The Arab League is a personification of the Arab identity. This identity, which means his-

tory, culture and tradition, has lived long before the Arab League was created."

Dr. Abdul Meguid said plans for a new Middle East integrating Israel as a full partner did not mean liquidating Arab identity or accepting Israel as member of the Arab League.

"Israel is Middle Eastern, but it is not Arab. We will remain Arabs, and at the same time Middle Eastern. If you tell me that this Arab identity will disappear, I will tell you sorry. I don't think this will happen either for me or for my grandchildren. They are Arabs and will remain Arabs," he said.

He added that the Arab League supported the peace process since 1991, but it would not accept Israeli domination or giving up demands for its withdrawal from occupied Arab territories.

"If they think they can dominate the region because of their technological superiority, they are wrong... four or five million (Israelis) cannot dominate 230 million Arabs," he said.

He added that Israel would be wrong to think it was doing Arabs a favour by taking part in the peace process.

"Israel is serving itself by establishing peace with its neighbours because it wants to belong to this area... but to come and tell me that their security needs keeping the (Syrian) Golan Heights. No way. This is a non-starter," he said.

Dr. Abdul Meguid acknowledged that changes were needed to make the league more efficient. These include amending its charter to change the voting system to accept majority voting in place of unanimity, and to establish an Arab court of justice to solve inter-Arab differences.

Algerian premier hints FIS leaders back in jail

PARIS (AFP) — Algerian Prime Minister Mokdad Sifi hinted for the first time in an interview Sunday that the two leaders of the banned Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) might have been sent back to prison.

Speaking to the Arabic-language Al Sharq Al Awsat, Mr. Sifi did not mention by name the two leaders who were put under house arrest in Algiers last September after being released from jail.

A month ago, the two — jailed in 1991 — were separated and sent to new and as yet unidentified residences. However, when the Arabic newspaper asked whether the FIS leaders have been sent back to prison, Mr. Sifi replied: "Yes, some of them."

Giving credence to the idea that the FIS leaders are back in jail, the movement's military wing, the Army of Islamic Salvation (AIS), last week announced the nomination of an "interim national emir," Madani Merzak, claiming that the FIS had not had any contact with the "historic leaders of the movement for more than a month."

In the hope that the FIS leaders might help end the violence wracking Algeria, Mr. Madani and Mr. Belhadj, who were sentenced in 1991 to 12 years in jail for "attacks on the stability of the state," were released last September into house arrest.

Four other FIS leaders, given sentences of four years and another leader sentenced to six years, were released

last February. Speaking to the Al Sharq Al Awsat, Mr. Sifi said, however: "We rapidly realised that we were dealing with people (the FIS leaders) who either had no authority over those responsible for the violence or, worse, supported the violence."

The authorities in October released what they said was a letter from Mr. Belhadj to the armed fundamentalist groups supporting their action.

Thousands of people have died in nearly four years of brutal civil war between the armed fundamentalists and the military-backed state, international human rights groups accuse both sides of appalling violence.

Mr. Sifi told the Al Sharq Al Awsat, however, that the "political dialogue remained open" but said it did not involve the FIS "as a party" since it had been dissolved by the courts and since the Algerian constitution barred "the use of religious, ethnic or linguistic symbols by political parties."

Mr. Sifi also claimed that the presidential elections already announced for later this year would go ahead in the presence of international observers and said the armed groups "will not be able to stop them happening."

"The initiative is with the security forces," he added, though the armed groups would still be able to launch a few "spectacular" such as "blowing up booty-trapped cars or killing individuals."

Khomeini's grandson emerges from wings

TEHRAN (AFP) — The rare public eulogy that "he has the blood of his father and his grandfather" and praised his "calm and control" in dealing with his father's death.

For the past two days Hassan Khomeini has regularly appeared flanking Iranian leader Ali Khamenei and President Ali Akbar Rafsanjani at the funeral and official ceremonies in his father's memory.

Iranians had only been vaguely aware of his existence before, through his father's official biography and photographs of the small boy who arrived in Iran at the age of seven shortly after the 1979 revolution.

There were reports that he was studying in the holy city of Qom, 150 kilometres south of Tehran, but nobody was

Parliamentary Speaker Ali Akbar Nateq-Nuri said in a

(Continued on page 7)



SENATORS MEET RAU: Upper House of Parliament (Senate) Speaker Ahmad Larvi and members of the Senate on Sunday holds talks with Johannes Rau, state premier of North-Rhine Westphalia and speaker of the Bundestag (upper house), at a meeting held at the Bundestag (see story on page one) (Petra photo)

Talibans on run south of Kabul

KABUL (AFP) — President Burhanuddin Rabbani's forces smashed through Taliban lines southeast of Kabul Sunday to inflict a second stunning defeat in a week, but the student-led movement resisted an attack in the west, an official spokesman said.

"I can confirm that more than 15 tanks, 30 artillery pieces, six multi-barrel rocket launchers and eight depots of munitions have been captured," on the southeastern front, said defence ministry spokesman Abdullah.

On this front 150 Taliban had been killed, 250 wounded and some 200 taken prisoner, since the fighting against the Taliban started in Kabul 10 days ago, he said.

However, to the west of Kabul, the pro-Rabbani offensive failed to gain any ground in face of a heavy Taliban bombardment complicated by extremely bad weather, according to journalists who visited that front.

Pro-Rabbani tank-backed infantry were seen regrouping for a fresh attack against the Taliban on the new front line south of Kabul at the district centre of Mohammad

Agha in Logar province late Sunday.

Mr. Abdullah told a news conference that pro-Rabbani attacks against the Taliban would cease "if they stop their military provocations," but it seemed clear this cleanup operation would not end so quickly.

"We are in hot pursuit of the Taliban," said national security chief engineer Fahim on a rain-swept hill-top overlooking Mohammad Agha town.

Wet and tired pro-Rabbani troops were seen arriving here as 10 trucks ferrying crate loads of captured ammunition towed Russian-made howitzers back to Kabul.

A few kilometres forward of this hill the sounds of infantry could be heard and plumes of smoke from artillery explosions seen.

At the former Taliban headquarters of Charasyah, 25 kilometres southeast of Kabul, which fell to pro-Rabbani troops early Sunday, portrait posters of Mr. Rabbani's military chief Ahmad Shah Masoud were seen being posted on the walls of the shuttered bazaar

shops. Checkpoints had been set up on the main road between here and Kabul where security troops checked all vehicles for looted goods.

On the roadside at one checkpoint the mass of confiscated material included rockets, a British Lee Enfield rifle, two electricity generators and the bulk of a telephone exchange.

Although the Defence Ministry spokesman said the Taliban had the secret aim of taking control of all Afghanistan, he said the Kabul government was still willing to include them in the current United Nations-sponsored peace talks.

He said that Mr. Rabbani would transfer power according to the U.N. plan, but expressed doubts that this would take place in two days' time as planned because "it seems the U.N. job is not finished yet."

Mr. Abdullah confirmed reports of fighting between the Taliban and pro-Rabbani forces in western Afghanistan, mostly in Farah province, which indicates an advance by the religious students.

Egypt police round up 1,250 suspects

MINYA (AFP) — Police have arrested around 1,250 suspected Islamic militants and supporters in a series of raids in southern Egypt in the last five days, police said Sunday.

More than 850 people were arrested in the Samalut region, 225 kilometres south of Cairo, in a police sweep of 66 villages which began Tuesday.

Another 400 young men were rounded up in the Mallawi area of Minya province, 300 kilometres (185 miles) south of the capital.

The detainees included a large number of schoolboys. Witnesses said some youths were arrested while at school. The raids began after Islamic militants shot and seriously wounded a policeman in a Samalut street on March 13, police said.

Police mainly targeted villages bordering desert areas around the town, where militants often use mountain

caves as hideouts.

Security officials in Cairo said eight members of the Egyptian Labour Party were also arrested in Minya province.

"The members were arrested not because they are members of the Labour Party but because they are all members of Jamaa Islamiyya," the main armed Islamic militant group, one security official told AFP.

The arrests raised to 20 the number of Labour Party members detained during the past two months in Minya, a stronghold of armed fundamentalists, where most attacks take place.

Three militants, including the leader of Jamaa Islamiyya in Mallawi, were killed in a shootout with police near Samalut on Friday.

The shooting raised to 676 the number of deaths in a three-year-old Islamic militant campaign to overturn Egypt's secular government.

Three thousand people, most of them youths aged 17 to 25, were arrested in Minya in mid-February on suspicion of belonging to militant groups. More than 2,000 of them were released on March 4 to mark the end of the Holy Month of Ramadan.

The Labour Party, a legal political party, has been allied with the banned Muslim Brotherhood organisation since 1987.

Although the Muslim Brotherhood officially condemns violence, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak accused it in January of supporting militant groups bent on toppling his government.

Fifteen Brotherhood members were arrested in Minya in early March. The security official also said security forces in Minya Saturday burned over 200 feddans (80 hectares) of sugar-cane fields, which fugitive militants often use to hide in.

3 U.N. peacekeepers wounded in S. Lebanon

TYRE (AP) — Three Nepalese peacekeepers were wounded Sunday when a mortar shell slammed into a U.N. military position in South Lebanon, a spokesman said.

Timur Goksel, spokesman of the 5,800-strong United Nations Interim Forces in Lebanon (UNIFIL), said the wounded Nepalese were evacuated by helicopter from the site of the attack near the inland village of Yater to a field hospital at UNIFIL headquarters in the border town of Naqoura on the Mediterranean.

One of the wounded soldiers was in critical condition, Mr. Goksel told the Associated Press in a telephone interview from UNIFIL headquarters.

The attack occurred shortly before midday (1000 GMT) on a newly established Nepalese UNIFIL position east of Yater, a village just outside a border enclave Israel occupies in South Lebanon as a "security zone."

U.N. peacekeepers have often been caught in the cross-fire involving guerrillas and Israeli occupation forces and their local militia allies of

the South Lebanon Army (SLA) army on the other. The Yater area facing the western sector of the Israeli-quiet border enclave had been quiet before midday and no exchanges were reported among the combatants.

An officer of the 668-strong Nepalese battalion within UNIFIL said the position targeted Sunday had been newly established. The officer, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the SLA, the Israelis and the guerrillas had opposed establishing that post.

Mr. Goksel said UNIFIL was investigating to determine the source of fire and the ordinance's caliber. He said the three wounded Nepalese had begun serving in the 10-nation UNIFIL a week ago.

UNIFIL was sent to Lebanon in 1978 following an Israeli invasion of the south. Part of the U.N.-policed zone overlaps with the "security zone," which Israel established in South Lebanon.

Guerrillas are active in the UNIFIL zone. Units of the 1,200-strong Israeli forces and the 2,500-member SLA militia deployed in the "security zone" have often violated the U.N.-policed

area. A total of 195 peacekeepers have been killed and 304 wounded since UNIFIL deployed in the south 17 years ago. Nineteen of the dead were from the Nepalese battalion.

Security sources reported that SLA hittop outposts facing Yater came under mortar fire from Iranian-backed Hizbollah guerrilla positions Sunday afternoon.

About 20 mortar shells were fired. The SLA retaliated by firing howitzer shells on suspected guerrilla hideouts in the area, said the sources.

Earlier Sunday, Israeli artillery gunners pounded guerrilla positions in the Iqlim Al Tufah highlands across from the central sector of the "security zone."

The sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the Israelis detected guerrillas attempting to infiltrate from their stronghold of Iqlim Al Tufah into the "security zone."

No casualties were reported in the shelling exchanges.

Sunday's casualties raised the overall toll this year from front, to 43 killed and 92 wounded.

COLUMN

Mandela gets peace award

DDURBAN, South Africa (AFP) — President Nelson Mandela pledged Saturday that never again would South Africa be the fountain-head for the destabilisation of its neighbours. Receiving the Africa Peace Award from Organisation of African Unity Secretary-General Salim Ahmed Salim, Mr. Mandela vowed that his country would "never again be the source of armaments used to suppress communities and to wage war against neighbours. 'Never again shall we spend our people's resources to develop weapons of mass destruction,'" he said in a speech prepared for delivery at the award ceremony. But he said that peace was more than "just the absence of war. The dark clouds still hovering above our landscape, particularly in Lesotho and Angola are matters of serious concern." Closer to home, Mr. Mandela said, was the violence that continued to plague South Africa's KwaZulu-Natal province, where more than 10,000 people have been killed in the past seven years in fighting between the Zulu-nationalist Inkatha Freedom Party and Mandela's African National Congress. "We shouldn't, for a moment, forget the people who yearn for our urgent intervention to bring them more than just a respite from war," Mr. Mandela said. "They deserve lasting peace and lasting security."

Kim Jong-il said to lay off cognac

SEOUL (R) — Kim Jong-il, North Korea's reclusive leader-in-waiting and legendary cognac quaffer, has given up his favourite tipple at the request of his doctors, a leading South Korean newspaper said. The Joong-Ang Daily News said the chubby, bespectacled Kim had reduced his weight by four to five kgs (8.5 to 11 lbs) since giving up the drink and now looked much healthier. A unnamed Western businessman who recently made a trip to the North was quoted by the daily as saying Mr. Kim's banquet table was like previously was without its trademark bottle of rare Hennessy cognac. When asked the reason, a North Korean official told the visitor: "Because doctors asked him to quit drinking," the newspaper said. It said Mr. Kim's improved health would help him formally to assume soon the leadership titles of state president and Communist Party chief held by his late father Kim Il-Sung. According to newspaper reports, Mr. Kim has for the past two years been the world's biggest single buyer of the rare Cognac produced by French luxury goods producer LVMH Louis Vuitton Moet Hennessy SA. The value of Mr. Kim's purchases is not available.

Indonesia's Garuda loses 5,000 passengers

JAKARTA (R) — Indonesia's National Airline suffered 5,000 cancelled bookings following a Japanese television report on a cholera outbreak on the resort island of Bali, the official Antara News Agency reported Saturday. It quoted Garuda International's commercial director, Kusnyono, as saying Friday that the Japanese tourists cancelling were mostly from Nagoya. Kusnyono, however, said the effect of the reports had started to decline. "We have invited several journalists from Japan to witness the real condition in Bali," he said. Japan's Health Ministry issued a report late last month saying 150 people who returned from Bali had contracted of shown symptoms of the disease. Indonesian officials, who want to clear up the issue before it hurts Bali's vital tourism industry, have strenuously denied the cholera reports. Tour operators in Bali, 1,300 kilometres east of Jakarta, have said they might demand up to \$1 billion in compensation from Japanese broadcaster NTVK, adding that Japan had embarrassed Bali many times by reporting negatively about the island.